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Violence in Young Adults' Relationships: Coercive Control and Love

Donna Clutterbuck

A thesis submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of PhD in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

School for Policy Studies, October 2018.

Word Count: 79,934

Abstract

This thesis details the first qualitative study in the United Kingdom looking specifically at coercive control and love within the relationships of young adults aged 18-25 with some comparison up to the age of 35. The purpose of this study was to determine whether coercive control is apparent in young adults' relationships and whether coercive control and love intertwine in these relationships. This is situated within and builds upon previous literature relating to violence against women and girls, and more specifically, violence within the relationships of younger people.

One focus of feminist research since the 1970s has been violence against women. In comparison, violence in the relationships of younger people in the United Kingdom has not been given the same amount of consideration.

While research into domestic violence undertaken in the United Kingdom tends to be qualitative, the bulk of the research examining abuse in younger people's relationships has been based in the United States, where quantitative methods are more commonly used.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with females and males aged between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. Additionally, secondary analysis of COHSAR twenty-one interview transcripts with participants aged 18-34 was employed. Research was conducted from a feminist perspective.

Findings demonstrate that love and coercive control do intertwine within the relationships of young adults and coercive control is gendered. But, the originality in this study lies in the finding that this idea of love between victims and perpetrators in these abusive relationships went alongside fear, guilt and responsibility, preventing young adults from leaving.

Acknowledgements

Undertaking this PhD has been a tough, but rewarding, experience, and it would not have been possible without the support I have received.

First, I would like to express my gratitude towards my supervisors, Professor Marianne Hester and Dr Christine Barter. Without their guidance, encouragement and confidence in my work, often at times when my confidence was lacking, this thesis would not have been achievable.

Thank you to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for funding my studies.

The support I have received from the staff and students from the Centre for Gender and Violence Research and the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol has been invaluable. The wealth of knowledge, passion and humour of this community is exceptional.

This thesis could not have been completed without the participants who took part in the fieldwork for this study; I am thankful for their openness and trusting me to present their views. I would like to thank the universities and university societies who enabled me to access and recruit the participants required for this study. Additionally, I would like to thank the participants of the COHSAR study, who enabled me to complete the secondary analysis component of this project.

I am indebted to my undergraduate tutor, the late Dr John Hamill, who taught me that if I did really want something, there is always a way to attain it. Without his motivation, I may not have had the self-assurance to embark on postgraduate study.

And finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who have lived this PhD experience with me and have supported me in far too numerous ways to mention – it is gratefully appreciated.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE:.....

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis details the first qualitative study in the United Kingdom looking specifically at coercive control and love within the relationships of young adults aged 18-25 with some comparison up to the age of 35. The purpose of this study was to determine whether coercive control is apparent in young adults' relationships and whether coercive control and love intertwine in these relationships. This is situated within and builds upon previous literature relating to violence against women and girls, and more specifically, violence within the relationships of younger people.

The United Nations define violence against women and girls as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private' (UN General Assembly, 1993). One form of violence against women and girls is domestic violence. Throughout this thesis the term 'domestic violence' will be used interchangeably with 'domestic abuse' and 'intimate partner abuse' to mean 'violence committed by current or former' partners (Gill et al., 2016).

Domestic violence came to the fore as a major 'social problem' in the 1970s (Hanmer, 2000: 9), and it is 'a central feature of women's political activism and feminist theorising' (Maynard and Winn, 1997: 175). More than one in four women in England and Wales have experienced some form of domestic violence (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2014; 2017). However, Kelly and Westmarland (2016) argue that this figure is incident-specific; it ignores the ongoing pattern of violence that women experience that is specific to coercive control and therefore ignores the context and meaning of the violence that women experience. Defining domestic violence as incident-specific is to ignore the gendered nature of this form of violence and to use a

male-view of what this abuse is, whilst removing the voices of female survivors of domestic violence (Gill et al., 2016; Kelly and Westmarland, 2016).

Fairly recently, in March 2013, under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, the Home Office extended the definition of domestic violence and abuse to 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality' (Home Office, 2013). Definitions of domestic violence and abuse are key to setting out what is considered to be abusive behaviour for those who are victimised and those who work within professions where they might come across domestic violence (Peckover, 2013: 11). The Home Office definition of domestic violence is not gendered. Peckover (2013: 11) explains that the absence of gender in the definition suggests that domestic violence is not being considered as differently gendered; meaning that the government definition does not recognise that domestic violence victims are predominantly female and its perpetrators are predominantly male. However, the A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls Action Plan (Home Office, 2014a; 2016) does highlight that violence is gendered, so the Coalition Government's messages were often contradictory.

Despite these contradictions, Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) figures state that 26% of women experience domestic violence compared to 14% of men, which shows that the prevalence of female victimisation is more than double that of male victimisation prevalence (ONS, 2014; 2017). In addition, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Public Health Guidance on Domestic Violence and Abuse points out that although women and men can both experience and perpetrate domestic violence, heterosexual women are more likely to be victimised and more likely to suffer 'more repeated physical violence, more severe violence, much more sexual violence, more coercive control, more injuries and more fear of their partner' (NICE, 2014: 7).

Walklate (2012: 498) has argued that 'we must not lose sight of the importance of understanding domestic violence as a gendered crime'. Definitions which mask gender differences also mask 'gendered power relations and inequalities' and put the focus on to 'family-based abusive behaviour' instead (Charles and Mackay, 2013: 610). This prevents policy makers from 'making connections between domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, from understanding the issue in terms of structural power inequalities and wider cultural factors, or from framing the issue in terms of gender inequality and social justice', as feminist scholars do, creating the impression that the experience of domestic violence is the same for both women and men (Charles and Mackay, 2013: 604). Kelly and Westmarland (2016) suggest that it is the use of prevalence data that has helped fuel the argument that domestic violence is perpetrated by equal numbers of women and men. Others argue that family relationships are the cause of domestic abuse and so adopt a gender-neutral approach. Farmer and Callan (2012: 14-15), in their report for the Conservative Party think-tank, the *Centre for Social Justice*, argue that a focus on gender prevents 'a more full understanding of domestic abuse' and that 'family relationships' should be the focus instead, as these 'are at the heart of the problem'. It is worth noting that the Conservatives do have a history of blaming social ills on what they consider to be dysfunctional families (for examples, see Duncan Smith, 2011; Mulholland, 2011; Grice, 2013).

The inclusion of young people aged sixteen and seventeen and coercive control are both new additions to the Home Office definition. Prior to 2013, the Home Office definition of domestic violence focused specifically on violence within adult relationships and defined adults as those aged 18 and over (Home Office, 2011a). This widening in definition was the result of a consultation with agencies who work with victims of domestic violence as well as members of the public, which was open from late 2011 until spring 2012 (Home Office, 2011a). Walklate (2013: 5) argues that this

new, wider definition shows the difficulty in 'what to count' as domestic abuse, as well as 'who is to be counted', while underlining attempts to be 'gender neutral'. Stark (2007) looks in-depth at coercive control and gender in his book 'Coercive Control'. Stark explains that 'coercion' is 'the use of force or threats to dispel a particular response' (Stark, 2007: 228) and 'control' includes 'structural forms of deprivation, exploitation and command that compel obedience indirectly by monopolising vital resources, dictating preferred choices, micro-regulating a partner's behaviour, limiting her options and depriving her of supports needed to exercise independent judgement' (Stark, 2007: 229). When an abuser exercises both coercion and control, they gain complete 'authority' over their victim (Stark, 2007: 229). Coercive control is 'a dynamic process linking a demand with a credible threatened negative consequence for non-compliance' (Dutton and Goodman, 2005: 746). The Serious Crime Bill was amended in 2015 to include domestic violence and to criminalise coercive control (House of Commons, 2015), meaning that coercive control is now a punishable offence in England and Wales, and indeed the only offence specifically linked to domestic abuse.

Although violence against women is a focal point for much feminist work, violence in the relationships of young adults has not received as much consideration, despite statistical data from the United Kingdom confirming that younger people are more likely to experience victimisation in their relationships than those in older age groups. The Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2017 Release (ONS, 2017) shows that 10% of young women aged 16-19 and 8.6% of young women aged 20-24 were victims of violence within their relationships within the past 12 months, compared to 5.8% of women aged 55-59 (ONS, 2017). However, although these figures show the prevalence of violence, they do not show the frequency, severity or the impact of abuse.

One of the mechanisms of control that has been highlighted by studies of both younger people and older adults is the idea of 'love' within intimate relationships. 'Romantic love' is important in the West, deemed to be the basis for marriage, and it is generally accepted that there is a suitable partner in the world for everyone and 'that

love is forever; that love is based on monogamy, fidelity, privacy and loyalty; and that such love is essential to self-fulfilment' (Donovan and Hester, 2011: 83). Love is seen as boundless and different to the love that individuals have for friends and family (Jackson, 1993) and is used as an excuse for acting in ways which may not usually be deemed acceptable (Fraser, 1999). Donovan and Hester (2011: 81) state that 'gender is important to understanding abusive relationships but so too are the differences in expectations of practices of love brought to relationships'. A theme within some studies is that love has been used by abusive partners in order to isolate and control women (Townes and Adams, 2000; Jackson, 2001; Wood, 2001; Donovan and Hester, 2011; Townes and Scott, 2013; Toscano, 2014). Some studies suggest women believe that controlling behaviour is 'normal' and that it means that their partner loves them (Wood, 2001; Chung, 2007; Townes and Scott, 2013; Toscano, 2014), so they stay away from friends and family in order to spend time with their boyfriends instead (Chung, 2007; Townes and Scott, 2013). Keeping victims away from friends and family ensures the woman remains dependent on the abuser and removes avenues for seeking help (Stark, 2007). Isolation and control, along with physical domestic violence, are the three key markers that Stark (2007) uses to explain his position that coercive control is a liberty crime. We need to find out more about what love means in young adults' relationships to consider whether love is a key mechanism for coercive controlling behaviour and whether young adults are also experiencing what Stark calls a liberty crime.

The chosen population for this study was young adults aged 18-25 years old. This age group was chosen as no other study has chosen to look exclusively at the experiences of coercive control within the relationships of young adults between these two ages in the United Kingdom. This age group is also considered a distinct period of the life-course. Arnett (2000: 469) calls this life-period 'emerging adulthood' as individuals between these ages are no longer bound by the rules of childhood, but neither do they have the same duties as adults. It is a time when relationships are trialled, without the constraints that come with older adulthood (Arnett, 2000). In the United Kingdom,

young people under the age of twenty-five are also not entitled to the same benefits as those aged twenty-five and over (UK Government, 2016a; UK Government, 2016b). The National Living Wage is also determined by age, with 25 being the age at which young people are entitled to the National Living Wage (UK Government, 2016c). The only possible reason for this is that young adults are expected to be reliant on their parents, suggesting that the government do not consider young adults to be full, independent adults, despite childhood officially ending at the age of eighteen. This of course puts those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five in the strange position of not being children but also not being considered real adults. It is the distinctiveness of this part of the life-course that makes 18-25-year olds an important group to study.

This research was conducted from a feminist perspective, using Stark's (2007) typology of coercive control as a starting point. For research to be considered feminist, certain conditions need to be met: the research must be 'non-hierarchical', a 'high degree of rapport' needs to occur between researcher and researched, there needs to be 'reciprocity' and 'the perspective of the women' must be at the centre of the research (Bryman, 2012: 492). Harding (1987: 7) contends that feminist research should always start from the position of women. In agreement, Ramazanolu and Holland (2002: 16) suggest that what makes feminist research 'distinctive' is 'that it is shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics and grounded in women's experience'. Feminist research should 'aim to produce knowledge that will be useful for effective transformation of gendered injustice and subordination' (Ramazanolu and Holland, 2002: 147). Or as Stanley (1990: 15) puts it, feminists should want 'to change the world, not only study it'. However, we also need to bear in mind that there are differences between women depending on social location and these create differing experiences (Harding, 1987), so feminist research should look at the ways in which gender overlaps or intersects with other socio-demographics (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 172).

In March 2016, the Conservative Government released its new Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020 which outlines what the Government intend to do to tackle violence against women and girls until the year 2020 (HM Government, 2016). It is worth noting that this Strategy also explicitly states that domestic violence is gendered (HM Government, 2016). The Strategy pledges to spend £80 million on services to reduce violence against women and girls up until 2020, but this spending will be used 'to support transformation in local service delivery' (HM Government, 2016: 31). The Strategy is much more concerned with local rather than national service provision and, as Kelly (2016) also asserted, when talking about services for violence against women and girls, we need to look more nationally so that services are co-ordinated. The Conservatives, however, have promised to continue reducing public spending (Conservatives, 2015). If the five years under the Coalition Government are anything to go by, this will have dire consequences for women and girls who have suffered domestic violence. Due to the reduction in government spending, cuts to local government budgets have meant women's refuges have experienced been left poorly funded (Women's Aid, 2014a). This has meant that 1 in 3 women are being sent away from refuges as refuges just do not have the resources to accommodate for the number of women who need their services (Women's Aid, 2014b). Although the Conservatives claim that refuges are local governments' concern, a government that does not protect vital services for domestic violence victims and survivors is not a government that prioritises tackling violence against women and girls.

There have also been cuts to legal aid which are not likely to be repealed over the next five years. Legal aid is public funding that can be used to 'help meet the costs of legal advice, family mediation and representation in a court or tribunal', if an individual does not have the funds available to them (UK Government, 2015). Victims and survivors of domestic violence can now only obtain legal aid if they can provide evidence of this violence (UK Government, 2015). This creates more contradictions. Many behaviours which constitute coercive control are often hidden or difficult to prove. The Government itself recognises that coercive control 'may appear innocent, but the

cumulative impact on the victim's every-day life will be significant, causing the victim to feel fear, alarm or distress' (Home Office, 2014b: 11). It makes absolutely no sense at all to criminalise coercive control, while blocking avenues to the only source of legal funding that many women who experience this violence depend on to successfully prosecute their abuser.

To help prevent early relationship abuse, the Government introduced the *This is Abuse* campaign (Home Office, 2011b). This campaign sought to try to stop teenage partner violence before it starts by challenging teenagers' ideas surrounding normalised abuse and by making sure that those who are affected are aware of where they can find support (Home Office, 2011b). The original campaign ran in spring 2010 and winter 2011, and included a leaflet and website providing information for teenagers about violence in intimate relationships and where to seek help (Home Office 2011b). The campaign was modified in 2013, with collaborations with the media (Home Office, 2014a). These collaborations helped in the development of new advertising campaigns highlighting abuse within teenage relationships (Home Office, 2014a). Boys were targeted, and the *This is Abuse* website included a web-page tailored towards encouraging boys to visit the website (Home Office, 2014a: 23). This website has since been rebranded as 'Disrespect Nobody' and includes pages devoted to relationship abuse, consent, sexting, rape and porn (Home Office 2016). A report summarising and evaluating the *This is Abuse* campaign indicated that the campaign was received positively amongst young people and an increased alertness to different forms of abuse was found (Home Office, 2015). However, the report also highlighted that there had not been much of an attitudinal shift because of the campaign (Home Office, 2015).

The new Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020 outlines the Government's continued commitment to ensuring 'healthy relationships' amongst young people by providing 'resources' to be used in schools, as well as 'investing £3.85 million in a new campaign' revolving around 'consent, 'sexting' and relationship abuse'

(HM Government, 2016: 9). Baroness Jones moved for an update to the Children and Families Bill to include compulsory sex and relationships education in schools to 'include information about same-sex relationships, sexual violence, domestic violence and sexual consent' (HL Deb, 2013-14 751 col. 1119). However, the House of Lords voted against this at 209 to 142 (HL Deb, 2013-14 751 col. 1153), highlighting yet more contradictions within government. In her review, Papadopoulos (2010: 75-76) asserts that 'promoting gender equality in schools' is needed, and that training should be provided to staff in order to ensure this, with 'statutory guidance' from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). 'Statutory Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)', which include gender inequalities within their syllabi, again guided by the DCSF (Papadopoulos 2010: 76). Stark (2016), at the *Chance for Change* conference, stated that it is imperative that young men know that all forms of violence are wrong, to 'create a culture of respect', and the best place for this to happen is in schools. Challenging ideas surrounding gendered violence is important in preventing violence in early and later adulthood. Although the government seem serious in their attempts to help prevent violence in the teenage years, the possibly the most effective way to challenge ideas surrounding violence would be to teach about healthy and unhealthy relationships in compulsory sex and relationship education in schools. A report into *Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence in Schools* (Women and Equalities Committee, 2016) was released in 2016, calling for mandatory PSHE and SRE in schools and this has been reflected in legislation – although the implementation may not be until 2019 and includes opt outs (see concluding chapter).

Additionally, the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020 states the Government will be working to prevent online abuse and abuse committed using new technologies (HM Government, 2016). The Strategy claims that it will endorse the findings from the bystander Programme developed by the University of the West of England with funding from Public Health England (HM Government, 2016). This bystander programme, called 'The Intervention Initiative', is a domestic and sexual violence prevention programme for university students (Fenton et al., 2014). Bystander

programmes, alongside compulsory comprehensive sex education in schools, are an important factor in preventing violence not only in the relationships of younger people, but also in later-life

Stark (2007) asserts that gender equality is the only way to combat coercive control. With the Conservative Government set to continue with the Coalition Government's contradictory messages surrounding gender and domestic violence, making moves towards eradicating coercive control and gender inequality through policy and legislation does not look promising. The hope is that this thesis will provide further exploration of the gendered nature of domestic violence, particularly in the case of coercive controlling violence within the relationships of younger adults.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is split into eight chapters. Following on from this introductory chapter, the structure of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The literature review follows on from this current chapter and examines previous research surrounding violence in young adults' relationships, coercive control and love. It includes literature on coercive control; gender and sexuality; consent; resistance; age and relationships; violence in younger people's relationships; love; love in abusive relationships; reasons behind abuse; technology; and policy and practice. This chapter shows current thinking and scholarship within these areas.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter contains a detailed explanation of the semi-structured interview method, as well as secondary analysis of interviews conducted in the COHSAR study.

Explanations of the piloting, the sample, sampling technique, analysis, problems with recruitment and ethical considerations are also included.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 - Findings

The findings of this study are split into four separate chapters:

1. The first findings chapter contains ideas about participants' constructions of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
2. The second findings chapter explores participants' definitions of violence.
3. The third findings chapter looks at participants' experiences of abusive behaviours, including abuse victimisation and perpetration.
4. The fourth findings chapter explores participants constructions of love and examines love within abusive relationships.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

Finally, the conclusion summarises the findings, before concluding and revisiting the research questions. Some pointers for further research and policy recommendations are also discussed.

Together, these chapters show that love and coercive control do intertwine within the relationships of young adults. But the originality in this study lies in the finding that this idea of love between young adults and their abusive partners goes **alongside** feelings of fear, guilt and responsibility, preventing young adults from ending abusive relationships. This thesis will now go on to look at the main literature and current thinking related to violence in the relationships of young adults.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the main research and literature relating to violence in young adults' relationships, love and coercive control. In order to do this, this chapter is split in to headings related to the different themes within the literature. The themes that are considered within this literature review are coercive control; gender and sexuality; resistance; consent; age and relationships; violence in younger people's relationships; love; love and abuse; reasons behind abuse; technology; and policy and practice relating to violence within the relationships of young adults. By looking at these themes it is hoped that a full picture of the current thinking related to violence within the relationships of young adults is made clear.

Coercive Control

Stark (2007) has examined coercive control within the relationships of adults in great detail in his book *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Everyday Life*. Stark (2007: 6) explains that since the 1980s, there have been huge strides in domestic violence policy and recommendations, including refuges and other support for adult women who have been victims of domestic violence; more research and knowledge-formation into different types of domestic violence; changes in the reactions of 'professionals' who come into contact with victims of domestic violence; and an awareness of domestic violence in general. However, Stark asserts there is still a long way to go: there has been little theoretical development surrounding domestic violence and strides in domestic violence policy have not affected 'coercive control' in intimate relationships (Stark, 2007: 8). Domestic violence is still equated to physical violence (Stark, 2007), although female abuse victims often state that it is the abuse 'that cannot be seen' which most affects their 'self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect' (Williamson, 2010: 1412). Williamson (2010: 1413) argues for the need to

acknowledge different forms of abusive behaviour that may not yet be covered by 'existing institutional frameworks' in order to understand domestic violence and the ways in which it is 'gendered'.

By using the work of Johnson (1995; 2006), Stark (2006) argues that the domestic violence movement can be revived by looking at other forms of abuse alongside physical violence. Johnson (1995; 2006) argues that there are different types of intimate partner violence and it is important that we are able to identify different types of abuse in our research. The different types of violence are distinguished by the amount of control exercised over a partner (Johnson, 2006). The four types of intimate partner violence, according to Johnson (2006: 1003), are: 'intimate terrorism', where the perpetrator is both violent and controlling; 'violent resistance', where violence is used in response to a partner who is both violent and controlling; 'situational couple violence', where there are incidents of violence by either partner in a relationship, but no controlling behaviours; and 'mutual violent control', where both partners are violent and controlling. Johnson (2006) argued that both intimate terrorism and violent resistance are gendered as they are perpetrated mainly by men and women, respectively. However, he states that situational couple violence and mutual violent control are ungendered (Johnson, 2006).

The type of violence that Johnson (2006: 1006) asserts is characterised by the most violent and controlling behaviour is 'intimate terrorism', which Kelly and Johnson (2008: 478) later refer to as 'coercive controlling violence' and is defined as 'a pattern of emotionally abusive intimidation, coercion and control coupled with physical violence against partners'. Men are usually the perpetrators of coercive control (Johnson, 1995; 2006: 1003; Kelly and Johnson, 2008). Stark (2006), however, is critical of Johnson because of his assertion that coercive control is characterised by emotional abuse alongside physical abuse, as Stark does not consider physical violence to be a

prerequisite for coercive control. Johnson also ignores the main reason behind the existence of coercive control: inequality between women and men (Stark, 2006).

Men use coercive control in response to the achievements women have made in the public sphere; as male supremacy is no longer considered acceptable in public life, some men now exert control and dominate women in their intimate relationships instead (Stark, 2007). The perpetrator wants his victim to act in a way in which he believes women should act to fit in with his beliefs of how men should act (Stark, 2007). Coercive control 'is gendered' as it happens as a result of women's 'sexual inequality' (Stark, 2007: 5). Men use coercive control in order to advance their own status above their partner through 'exploitation, structural constraints and isolation' (Stark, 2007: 205). Perpetrators use 'surveillance and behavioural regulation', so that the victim feels as though their abuser is always there (Stark, 2007: 208-209). Surveillance is used by the perpetrator to ensure that the victim adheres to the behaviour that the abuser wants from his victim (Dutton and Goodman, 2005). This results in victims changing their behaviour to suit their abuser even when the abuser is not around (Stark, 2007). Coercive control can also include 'withholding or rationing food, money, medicine or other things on which a woman depends', which results in women's dependence on their abuser (Stark, 2007: 253). Keeping victims away from their friends and family further increases this dependence and prevents the victim from seeking help (Stark, 2007). Perpetrators use physical and sexual violence to further control their victims, as it is the fear of this violence that leads to compliance (Stark, 2007).

Coercive control is hidden because abusers often exert control over tasks and behaviours that have been labelled as female, such as domestic tasks and childrearing, so it can be difficult to establish whether coercive control is involved or whether women are conforming to traditional female roles (Stark, 2007). However, Stark (2007: 384) explains that one can establish the workings of coercive control by looking at

whether 'constraints are patterned, ongoing, non-voluntary and personalised'. Stark (2007) asserts that gender equality is the only way to combat coercive control. He considers coercive control to be a 'liberty crime' committed by perpetrators against their victims by 'violating their physical integrity (domestic violence), denying them respect and autonomy (intimidation), depriving them of social connectedness (isolation) and appropriating or denying them access to the resources required for personhood and citizenship (control)' (Stark, 2007: 15). Victims of coercive control lose their independence and free-will, which are considered to be uniform rights in contemporary society (Stark, 2007: 222). 'Security, dignity, autonomy and liberty are rights that are universally recognised as worthy of state protection', but coercive control does not allow these rights to be realised (Stark, 2007: 221). Coercive control should be, at the very least, treated as a 'course of conduct crime', such as 'harassment, stalking or kidnapping' (Stark, 2007: 382). Stark (2007: 383) also stresses that we need to look at the abuse as a whole – although 'threats' and 'harassment' are already illegal, their real meaning for the victim is only conveyed when taken together along with other forms of abuse that may be occurring. In order to move domestic violence policy and practice forward, legislation, domestic violence services and activists should work collectively to remove gender inequalities in society (Stark, 2010).

Victims may not resist or leave relationships, not because they do not want to or because they do not have the ability; but because they are worried about the repetition of past behaviours or because they do not have the 'structural' facilities to do so (Stark, 2007: 203). Many victims of coercive control pretend it is not happening as they do not want to be seen as a victim (Stark, 2007). Stark (2007) explains that when the expectation in contemporary society is that people, women and men, are autonomous, this results in feelings of embarrassment on the part of the victimised woman. Sometimes 'women forge safety zones', which can be places where women can go or just time spent thinking (Stark, 2007: 216). However, these are destroyed by the abuser (Stark, 2007). Prior to Stark, Hester (1992) argued that men develop new ways to dominate and control women as women develop new ways to resist

domination. As Stark (2007) argues, it is that men develop new ways to counter women's resistance. Men respond to societal change by innovating new ways of dominating women so that male dominance reigns and men must consistently work to uphold dominance over women (Hester, 1992). Women may try to find other ways to try to regain some autonomy through self-harm or alcohol (Stark, 2007). Stark (2007: 391) explains that these 'seemingly self-destructive behaviours... are re-framed in this context as efforts to preserve autonomy in situations where agency is disallowed'. Stark (2007: 381) argues that 'traditional theories of victimisation fail to capture the experience of entrapment'. Responses to coercive control, resistance from victims, including the victim murdering the perpetrator, are 'justified only because they were being deprived of freedom and autonomy' and the victim has failed to liberate herself by other means (Stark, 2007: 382).

Although there has been research into what coercive control is, there has been less research into why some people, men in particular, use coercive control to control others, and women in particular (Tanha et al., 2010: 2010). Stark explains that men are more likely to use coercive control against their partners, but according to Anderson (2009: 1444), Stark does not try to 'develop a theoretical understanding of why coercive control is gendered' (Anderson, 2009: 1444). Anderson (2009: 1444-1445) agrees that coercive control is gendered, but she believes that 'coercive control is an empirical and theoretical issue that must be studied instead of assumed'. Anderson (2009: 1448) states that we need to find out 'whether, how, when and why men are more willing and able to control partners through coercive control', but because Stark uses 'women's victimization narratives, he lacks the comparative data to address these questions'. In response, Stark (2009: 1511) has argued that Anderson is right to suggest that he does not 'present a general theory of gender and violence', but he adds that he and Anderson 'have different notions of what it means to theorise violence against women', and I would agree with this. Stark (2009) *has* argued that it is inequality between women and men that makes coercive control gendered. Stark (2009) explains that at the micro level, men use coercive control to abuse what are traditionally

considered female traits and behaviours in order to satisfy their own wants and needs, while restricting women's independence and preventing women from participating in public life. On a larger scale, coercive control needs inequality between women and men in order for it to work (Stark, 2009). In agreement, Hester (2010) argues that coercive control within relationships is both the result of gender inequality and one of the key mechanisms for its maintenance. Because women have fewer 'resources, power and opportunities', 'the abuse women experience from men has entirely different dynamics, meaning and outcomes than the assaults women commit' (Stark, 2009: 1511-1512). Women are unable to use coercive control successfully because women do not have the 'social facility to impose comprehensive levels of deprivation, exploitation and dominance' (Stark, 2006: 1024).

Stark (2009: 1512) does not attempt to explain 'why' some men use coercive control while others do not, he is much more interested in looking at the 'what, where and how' of coercive control in response to women's resistance and greater equality. Stark is clear that coercive control will be used by some men for as long as inequalities between women and men exist. That said, we need to use Stark as a starting point for further research, to 'reignite feminist theoretical debate about how and why domestic violence is gendered' (Anderson, 2009: 1455). Looking at how coercion works within abusive relationships would allow us to gain a greater understanding of 'gender differences' (Dutton and Goodman, 2005: 744). We also need to know more about how victims of coercive control's lives are affected as a result of abuse. Williamson (2010) asserts that we should look at the experiences of victims of coercive control and how they negotiate this system of abuse. The link between gender and abuse is affected by other variables (Hester 2010) and the impact of abuse on an individual is dependent upon one's social location, for example, one's age, sexuality, ethnicity, etc., and how this interacts with gender (Hester, 2010; Donovan and Hester, 2014). This study therefore includes male participants, in order to examine differences in experiences and impact of abusive behaviours.

The research outlined so far has been mainly about adults and another important question, where this thesis is concerned, is the extent to which these issues, concepts and mechanisms apply to younger adults, and if so, how? The evidence so far has suggested that, in adult relationships, coercive control is gendered. The next section now looks at the issues of gender and sexuality.

Gender and Sexuality

Hester (1992: 1) contends that 'it is within the construct of male and female sexualities that we may observe the central dynamic of male domination over women', thus suggesting that sexuality is key when looking at violence against women. There is an antagonistic relationship between femininity and masculinity, especially in terms of sexual reputation, and female sexuality is considered inferior to male sexuality (Hester, 1992: 1). Women are expected to be naïve about sex and to forsake their own wants and needs in favour of their male partner's needs (Holland et al., 1998). Women are taught to keep their 'reputations' intact by resisting sexual encounters that could put their reputations in jeopardy, but conversely, men are taught that to be a real man, one must seek out sex (Holland et al., 1998: 7). This means there is a 'double standard' that leads to women's sexuality being scrutinised (Holland et al., 1998: 173; Carmody and Ovenden, 2013: 2). A woman who is seen to want to have a sexual encounter is seen as a deviant, who defies the rules of femininity. In contemporary society, Jackson and Scott (2004a: 240) argue, the gap between 'being too sexual and not sexual enough' has got smaller, which makes it more difficult for women and girls to conduct what is deemed as appropriate sexual behaviour. If a girl is perceived as being too sexual, this can lead to derogatory labels, such as 'slag', or ending up with a 'bad sexual reputation' (Holland et al., 1998: 175). For men, this behaviour is seen as 'normal' masculine behaviour (Holland et al., 1998: 11). These differences are seen as 'biological' or

‘natural’, so this creates the impression that these differences will always remain (Lees, 1986: 18).

Girlguiding (2013a), who are a UK-wide charity for girls and young women, have their own 'research programme' which 'explores girls' attitudes and gets below the surface in order to understand how girls feel about a range of important issues'. In 2013, Girlguiding (2013b: 24) released a report of their annual 'Girls' Attitudes Survey' which sampled 1,288 girls aged between seven and twenty-one in the UK and 'focused on equality'. Seventy-five per cent of girls in the Girlguiding (2013b: 8) survey believed that sexism is endemic and 'it affects most areas of their lives'; 28% have received 'unwanted sexual attention'; 28% have 'experienced unwanted touching'; and 51% have been 'subjected to sexual jokes and taunts'. Sexual harassment has been experienced by most of the girls and schools are a key site for this (Girlguiding, 2013b: 9).

In 2010, psychologist Linda Papadopoulos conducted a review into the sexualisation of young people, on behalf of the Home Office as part of the *Together we can end Violence against Women and Girls* consultation (Papadopoulos, 2010). As Duschinsky (2013: 256) states, there is 'no agreed definition' of sexualisation. However, Papadopoulos (2010: 6) uses the term 'sexualisation' to mean 'the imposition of adult sexuality on to children and young people before they are capable of dealing with it, mentally, emotionally or physically'. The report reviews 'available data on the sexualisation of young people' (Papadopoulos 2010: 17). Papadopoulos notes that sexualisation is inherent in 'all cultures and all social classes, although the channels may vary' (Papadopoulos 2010: 30) and that 'by sending out the message that girls are there to be used and abused, there is a danger that we are turning boys into consumers of the female body, who see sex as a means of domination and control rather than an act of intimacy and a source of mutual pleasure' (Papadopoulos 2010: 66). However, Egan (2013) and Duschinsky (2013) argue that authors who stress the

importance of sexualisation portray young people as passively accepting sexist messages and often ignore the resistance (in its various forms) young women forge against these messages. Still, Duschinsky (2013) does recognise the potential in using conversations surrounding sexualisation to highlight gendered inequalities in young people's lives.

Most insults used against girls are bound up with sexual reputation; this is not the same for boys (Lees, 1986). Lees (1986: 25) explains that although, generally, the word 'slag' (and others like it) is thought to mean 'a girl who sleeps around promiscuously', when 'slag' is used as an insult towards a girl, it often has nothing to do with whether she is promiscuous or not. Girls can be called 'slags' for various reasons: having friends who are boys, being loud, having what is perceived as low intelligence, rejecting a boy, wearing the wrong clothes, carrying contraception, chatting up boys, being good looking, etc., or for a 'woman who behaves in the way men are expected to behave' (Lees, 1993: 235). Any girl without a boyfriend can be designated a 'slag' and the only way to avoid being labelled a 'slag' is for a girl to be in a relationship with a boy (Lees, 1986: 36). Jackson and Scott (2004b) argue that sex is seen as something sacred and one should only have sex with one person: one's current partner. If a girl is perceived as having sex with someone who is not her current partner, she is labelled a 'slag'. Therefore, 'slag' is used to ensure that female sexual behaviour conforms to what is deemed suitable for women and to render girls and women dependent on boys and men to keep their reputations unblemished (Lees, 1986). Lees (1993: 31) argues that 'learning to be masculine' means 'learning to be sexist', by, for example, using demeaning language towards women and girls or by telling sexist jokes: making jokes about women and girls is a part of male culture. Constructions of sexuality are also evident in younger children, as Renold (2000; 2003) shows with data from her Doctoral ethnographic work with ten- and eleven-year olds. This study took place over the course of 1 year and included participant observation, group interviews and focus groups in schools, in two year six classrooms (Renold, 2000; 2003). Renold (2000) found that for girls, having a boyfriend was key to defining their sexuality, but for boys,

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having a girlfriend was not the only way to assert masculinity – for example sporting achievement was also valued (Renold, 2000). This study highlights how, even at ten years old, boys are expected to display masculinity, and they do this by displays of sexist behaviour towards girls and homophobia towards some boys (Renold, 2000; 2003). The pressure of compulsory heterosexuality and the sexual double standard are present even at this age (Renold, 2000; 2003).

Similarly, Lombard (2012; 2016) conducted qualitative research with eighty-nine 11 and 12-year-old females and males in schools in Glasgow, Scotland to find out about young people's ideas surrounding male violence towards women. Young people's views were first assessed using an 'exploratory questionnaire', which asked general questions about the young people's lives, before moving on and focusing on gender and violence (Lombard, 2012: 1139). The answers that the young people gave in this questionnaire aided in the formation of vignettes and questions used in discussion groups with the young people (Lombard, 2012). Crucial to this current study, violence was considered a normal extension of biological masculinity for adult men; that men are expected to be violent based on ideas of male physical prowess and female defencelessness (Lombard, 2012; 2016; Barter and Lombard, 2018). There was also a distinction made between 'real violence', which was male-on-male violence, that happened in public and resulted in 'physical injury', and peer-on-peer violence and female victimisation which were not considered to be 'real violence' (Barter and Lombard, 2018: 292). The young people in Lombard's study displayed attitudes of accepting violence, whilst simultaneously blaming women for their victimisation (Barter and Lombard, 2018). These views were held by both female and male participants.

McCarry (2009; 2010) also conducted 13 focus groups in Glasgow, with 77 young people from 10 schools aged 15-18. Forty-three of these participants were female and 34 were male (McCarry, 2009; 2010). McCarry found that male violence was considered normal and sometimes even vindicated by young people (McCarry, 2009; 2010). The young people were hesitant to say there was a gender difference in relationship violence perpetration and women were considered to blame for violence

towards them (McCarry, 2009; 2010). Despite knowing that prevailing models of masculinity can be damaging, all the young men in the study subscribed to these models (McCarry, 2010). McCarry (2010) asserts that to understand the normalisation of male violence towards women, we must first understand how young people interpret masculinity and femininity.

Again, in Scotland, in 2014, Zero Tolerance published a report of their study investigating young people's attitudes to pornography, sex and relationships. Zero Tolerance are an Edinburgh-based charity to help end violence against women and girls (Zero Tolerance, 2014). They conducted an online survey with 237 young people aged 14-20 and six focus groups, with 40 young people aged 14-24 (Zero Tolerance, 2014). The majority of the online survey participants were female, but the focus group participants were almost evenly split in terms of gender – with 21 females and 19 males taking part in these discussions (Zero Tolerance, 2014). Again, it was found that participants were aware of the sexual double standard; that male sexuality should be prioritised against female sexuality and that a bad reputation was often bound up with perceived female promiscuity (Zero Tolerance, 2014). Though this was rejected in favour of more equal relationships by some participants (Zero Tolerance, 2014). Additionally, young women were in the contradictory position of wanting boys to find them attractive, but not wanting to be considered 'slutty' (Zero Tolerance, 2014: 16). Unsurprisingly, many participants felt that sex and relationship education needed to be more 'comprehensive' (Zero Tolerance, 2014: 28).

In a more recent study, Fenton and Jones (2018: 147) surveyed 381 'incoming undergraduates attending a university in South-West England', to find out about their 'rape and domestic violence and abuse myth acceptance and readiness for change.' Much of the sample were female and heterosexual and most of the participants were from the UK (Fenton and Jones, 2018). Fenton and Jones (2018: 159) found 'moderate support for rape myths' and victim blaming amongst these participants, and males were more likely to support these myths. Endorsement of myths such as 'women must physically resist' and 'perpetrators use weapons' for rape to have occurred was infrequent, but the minority who did subscribe to this view had a greater chance of

supporting domestic violence myths (Fenton and Jones, 2018: 160-161). Subscribing to these myths was also associated with domestic and sexual abuse 'denial' (Fenton and Jones, 2018: 161).

These studies show that constructions of gender which favour male sexuality over female sexuality are pervasive from primary school age up until young adulthood, which is important to consider when researching domestic violence. If these gendered attitudes are ingrained from such a young age, and then reinforced through peer relationships throughout schooling, then these gendered constructions of female inferiority can play out in the relationships of young adults and beyond. This is a concern for this current study.

In a focus group conducted as part of Papadopoulos' (2010) review, one teenager remarked that the word 'slag' was also often used within friendship groups of girls as a term of endearment or even as a joke. Femininity and masculinity both rely on each other for survival; one cannot thrive without the other (Holland et al., 1998). Lees (1986) explains that girls are defined as good or bad by both girls and boys, albeit from a male perspective; girls help to uphold male superiority. Even if girls are calling each other 'slags' as a joke or in an endearing way, this could reinforce male superiority and females being defined by their sexuality alone. Holland et al. (1998) assert that once women realise that they are complicit in reproducing male dominance, we can begin to make gender equality a possibility. This is not to support the idea that women are to blame for uncontrolled male sexuality but shows how pervasive institutionalised heterosexuality is; that male dominance is internalised by both females and males, so much so that women experience victim-blaming from both women and men.

Holland et al. (1998) used data from the Women's Risk and Aids Project and the Men's Risk and Aid Project to discuss heterosexuality. Data utilised from these projects included 148 interviews with young women and 46 interviews with young men aged 16-21 (Holland et al., 1998). They found that not many women 'resist conventional

femininity' (Holland et al., 1998: 9); however, Holland et al. (1998: 171) explain that by conforming to traditional ideals of femininity, women help to reinforce sexism, therefore aiding in the survival of the 'male-in-the-head'. Holland et al. (1998: 3) explain that 'masculinity' is privileged in heterosexual relationships and the concept the 'male-in-the-head' is used to convey 'institutionalised heterosexuality' (Holland et al., 1998: 26). Women are expected to construct and refine their bodies in line with what men want (Holland et al., 1998). This is not easy: girls who do not take care with their appearance can be designated as ugly; those who do are seen as inviting sexual assault (Lees, 1986). This is what Holland et al. (1998: 19) call the 'male gaze'. Holland et al. (1998: 19-20) explain that the 'male gaze' is joined by other ways of regulating female behaviour. Women conform themselves to the preferences of men, living in such ways as to not challenge male power (Holland et al., 1998). For example, if women display any kind of sexuality, this is considered a *threat* to male power (Holland et al., 1998). Defining women as 'sexy' creates female objectification (Hester, 1992: 1) and delineating girls as a product of their sexuality alone means women and girls will remain inferior to men and boys (Lees, 1986), who are defined by other attributes such as 'being tough' or 'smart' (Lees, 1993: 30). The 'male-in-the-head', then, can be considered a way of regulating female behaviours, by suppressing female sexuality in favour of male preferences, to make sure men retain all power in relationships (and society in general). Hester (1992: 77) has argued that 'heterosexuality must be recognised as a political institution', which 'serves as social control of women in the interests of men'. Stark (2007) has explained that men use coercive control in response to women moving towards equality in public life. Using demeaning language towards young women, telling sexist jokes and delineating women to their sexuality are all ways in which men can control female sexuality and regulate female behaviour. Controlling sexuality is one way in which men and boys can still exert power over women and girls without being condemned by contemporary society. As it is so endemic, it can happen within the context of an abusive relationship without arousing suspicion.

The 'male-in-the-head' is relevant to this current study, as it may help to explain how young women act in their relationships with men. If heterosexuality *is* institutionalised and if masculinity and male preference *are* privileged, putting male needs above female needs in relationships is normalised. This may go some way in explaining if and why young women become tied to abusive relationships, if young women see controlling behaviours, including the control of their sexuality and behaviours, as features of a loving relationship.

Resistance

Although conforming to traditional feminine roles was the norm, there was some evidence of resistance to the 'male-in-the-head' in Holland et al.'s (1998) study. Rather than resisting the 'male-in-the-head' by expressing their own sexualities, women were more likely to challenge male ideas of 'desire and natural dominance', instead (Holland et al., 1998: 189). A woman can criticise her partner's sexual performance, however, this could back-fire, as it shows that she has been sexually active, thus positioning herself as deviant (Holland et al., 1998). The children and young people in McCarry and Lombard's (2016) studies showed awareness of the social construction of gender, that prescribed gender roles were not always fitting with the ways in which the young people saw themselves; but as compulsory heterosexuality is so ingrained in social life, they had difficulty in resisting these stereotypes.

Similar resistance was found amongst participants in a recent study in The Netherlands. Cense et al. (2018) interviewed young women and men aged 16-21 about their sexual experiences. They found that although traditional constructions of femininity and masculinity still affect young people's 'negotiation of sexual boundaries', they also found that 'new gender norms' are beginning to play out in the lives of young people (Cense et al., 2018:277). Some young women showed signs of

‘self-control, self-interest and self-determination’ and many of the young men asserted the importance ‘mutuality’ when talking about their sexual experiences (Cense et al., 2018: 287). However, we need to be mindful that many young people still do subscribe to traditional gendered norms (Cense et al., 2018).

Ringrose et al. (2012) found some evidence of resistance from girls who endured sexual harassment at school. Ringrose et al. (2012: 30) explain that girls sometimes resorted to ‘wearing shorts under skirts or even refusing to wear skirts’ to prevent unwanted sexual advances. Although this may seem limited, this shows that some girls do try to resist harassment even though they do not have many opportunities or resources to do so.

In an earlier paper, Renold and Ringrose (2008), using data from their previous, separate qualitative research with pre-teenagers and teenagers, looked at how young girls resist against dominant heterosexuality and sexism. They found that some girls did tell stories about how they attempted to resist against dominant norms of heterosexuality, but these were often contradictory (Renold and Ringrose, 2008). The girls’ resistance was generally through distancing themselves from other girls, who they deemed as ‘girlie’, or by distancing themselves from working-class girls who they suggested were ‘loud’ or ‘tarty’ (Renold and Ringrose, 2008: 323). They found that some of the teenage girls denoted other girls as ‘sluts’ when they behaved in ways the girls believed was to please boys (Renold and Ringrose, 2008: 325). Defining oneself as a ‘tomboy’ was another way in which girls were able to resist ‘sexual harassment and innuendo [and] coercive romantic positionings’, but again this is based on distancing oneself from those girls who do perform ‘the dominant heterosexualised hyper-femininity’ (Renold and Ringrose, 2008: 326-327). Girls distancing themselves from other girls helps to construct new ‘forms of dominance’ based on class and ‘race’ (Renold and Ringrose, 2008: 332) which do not challenge traditional male views of femininity, or the ‘male gaze’, thus supporting the theory of the ‘male-in-the-head’.

Ringrose and Renold (2012: 462) draw on data from four qualitative datasets of ethnographic research with teenage girls conducted by themselves, separately, in the UK, to explain how 'fantasy' can work as a mode of resistance amongst working-class girls. They used 'case-studies' of four working-class girls aged 13-14 from the four different research projects to illustrate this (Ringrose and Renold, 2012: 465). The girls' fantasies included desires of academic and economic fulfilment through high-status careers and futures that did not include men or marriage (Ringrose and Renold, 2012). Others fantasised about using their bodies or appearance to be successful professionally, either as a 'model' or in the 'beauty industry' (Ringrose and Renold, 2012: 470-471), or by marrying 'a rich man' (Ringrose and Renold, 2012: 472). The fantasies showed girls as attempting to escape 'formations of normative, appropriate sexually regulated femininity', and showed that fantasies may not be 'imaginary' (Ringrose and Renold, 2012: 473). There were also contradictions within the fantasies, as the girls fantasied about being able to 'exist as active agents and objects of desire' simultaneously (Ringrose and Renold, 2012: 474); the girls wanted to be independent but also wanted by men. Ringrose and Renold (2012: 474) assert that these fantasies show that girls' resistance to traditional ideas of femininity can take on many forms.

The Girlguiding (2013b: 20) survey found that girls resisted sexism by concentrating on 'their relationships with family and friends, and their health and education', and despite the sexism, most of the girls were 'positive about their lives'. Lees (1993: 32) contends that 'learning to be a girl involves learning to conform to, resist and somehow survive the blatant sexism all around and to be reticent about your own desires'. Girls cannot defend themselves against boys without a backlash of comments labelling them 'manhaters' (Lees, 1993: 32). Echoing this, Ringrose et al. (2012: 49) assert that 'girls required an enormous degree of resilience just to survive in the school context' and that girls were 'in a state of constant vigilance about their own appearance and behaviour and watching for boys who might hurt or humiliate them'.

One organisation aiding young women and girls to resist sexism and sexualisation is 'Sexualised Protest: Action, Resistance, Knowledge' (SPARK). SPARK are 'a movement to challenge the sexualisation of girls', present in the United Kingdom and elsewhere around the world (Edell et al., 2013: 279). SPARK is 'an intergenerational partnership', which 'engages girls in conversations about sexualisation and sexuality' to build a 'collective understanding' about sexualisation (Edell et al., 2013: 279). SPARK provides 'actions initiatives and programmes, providing safe spaces for girls to train as activists and empower themselves to be part of the solution instead of passively participating in the problem' (Edell et al., 2013: 279). By working together with girls, SPARK aims to learn about the 'contradictions' within girls' resistance (Edell et al., 2013: 281). Edell et al. (2013: 282) assert that young women working with SPARK are 'learning to challenge' sexist messages in contemporary society and are 'defining 'sexy' for themselves based on their embodied awareness of their own experiences of pleasure and beauty'. They believe that solidarity between women and girls will aid in the deconstruction of sexist messages in society (Edell et al., 2013).

Feminist resistance is also present in the media that young women interact with. Online magazine, Rookie, which was devised in 2011 by teenager Tavi Gevison, publishes articles for young women and much of its content is by teenage girls, though it also accepts content from and is read by adults too (Rookie, 2015). Themes in the magazine include anything from music and fashion to relationships, but with feminist undertones, which differentiates this magazine from other magazines aimed at women. Riot Grrrl is another movement that encourages feminist activism. Riot Grrrl began in Washington, USA, in the early 1990s, but has spread worldwide (Rosenberg and Gorofalo, 1998). Riot Grrrl is known as 'punk rock feminism', but Riot Grrrl incorporates other music genres (Rosenberg and Gorofalo, 1998: 809), so perhaps Riot Grrrl would be better described as a feminist music movement. Topics of discussion within Riot Grrrl include 'eating disorders, rape, abuse, self-mutilation, racism, self-defence' and Zines (do-it-yourself magazines) are used to connect with others within the Riot Grrrl movement (Rosenberg and Gorofalo, 1998: 810). Many within the Riot

Grrrl movement now connect online (Rosenberg and Gorofalo, 1998). These forms of resistance are only examples, there are other groups out there, and they show that not all young women are willing to accept the status-quo; some young women actively resist patriarchy. However, although most of the girls in the Girlguiding (2013b: 21) survey believe that feminism has been important for women and only 21% believe that feminism is irrelevant, only 35% said that they were a feminist. This could be because there is a public perception of gender equality and so feminism is not seen as important as it once was. Participants in Mackay's (2013: 219) study suggested that there was a public idea of women having greater freedoms and women being able to make 'free-choices', which is seen as women having full equality in contemporary society. Therefore, this has resulted in feminism being considered unimportant. This may well be the reason for the discrepancy in the Girlguiding study.

Nonetheless resistance should come as no surprise: Stark (2007) proposed that women do resist coercive control by different means, but men often find ways of countering this resistance and preventing women gaining control over their lives and Hester (1992: 3) argued that men develop new ways to dominate women as women find ways to subvert male domination. Male domination and control are, in effect, a response to women's resistance. What we do not know is whether coercive control operates in the same way in younger women's lives as it does in older women's. Are controlling and coercive behaviours in the relationships of young adults a response to young women's resistance?

Consent

Related to the concepts of gender and sexuality is the concept of 'consent'. 'Consent' is a term that is often used within literature pertaining to sexual abuse, however it is often left undefined (Beres 2007; 2014). Sexual violence is defined as 'sex without consent', but without defining what 'consent' means (Beres, 2007: 93). Consent is also

a central term in healthy relationships programmes (Beres, 2014). Generally, consent is seen as 'a form of agreement to participate in sexual activity', but how this 'agreement' is made and who can agree is contested (Beres, 2014: 374). Beres (2014: 377) argued that consent is often used synonymously with 'willingness to participate in sex', but she is sceptical as to whether these terms are understood by young adults in this way. Beres (2014) used data from two of her own studies completed in Canada and New Zealand conducting interviews with young adults aged 18-30, which looked at participants' definitions of consent. She found that participants did not see consent as tantamount to 'communicating a willingness to participate in sex' (Beres, 2014: 384-385). Beres (2014) therefore argued that it is important to be clear about the meaning of consent when developing programmes that look at sexual abuse. She also argued that by defining consent and by looking at how consent is conveyed in relationships, as well as how this is affected by 'broader social contexts', would aid in a better understanding of non-consent as well as sexual violence (Beres, 2007: 108).

This idea that consent and willingness to have sex are not the same entities is underpinned by studies which show that women have sex even though they do not want to (Walker, 1997). Walker (1997) reviewed literature relating to why young women consent to unwanted sex. She found that 'socialised' gendered norms surrounding sexuality moderate 'compliant sexual behaviour' (Walker, 1997: 160). That male sexual needs are considered uncontrollable and that women engaging in unwanted sexual activity is seen as normal within relationships (Walker, 1997). Similarly, Morgan et al. (2006) looked at how women and men explained women having sex despite not wanting to. The most popular reason given by females and males in their study was 'keeping the men happy', which again supports the gender socialisation theory (Morgan et al., 2006: 521).

Mackinnon (1989) argued that sex can be non-consensual even if there is no physical force involved. She argued that rape is both sexual and violent and definitions of rape

that conceal its sexual nature reinforce the argument that sexual abuse must always be characterised by physical force, which is not always the case (Mackinnon, 1989). Arguments such as these are used to separate sex from sexual abuse, when the two are intrinsically linked (Mackinnon, 1989). Whilst female sexual needs are seen as coming second to male sexual needs, men are also socialised into ignoring female needs (Mackinnon, 1989). Men are supposed to be the ones who initiate sex and women either give consent or they do not, therefore consent is considered a female responsibility (Mackinnon, 1989). However, Mackinnon (1989: 180) also argues that 'women are also violated everyday by men who have no idea of the meaning of their acts to the woman'; that men do not realise that women are often engaging in sexual activity that they do not want. This is not to say that men are excused from their abusive behaviour – far from it – but what Mackinnon is saying here is that *some* men are not aware that women are seemingly willingly taking part in sexual activity because they have been socialised into believing that women are supposed to be submissive to male sexual needs. Burkett (2010: 64), in her thesis, looked at why 'some young women engage in consensual, unwanted sex'. Her female participants talked about the importance of refusing to have sex if they did not want to. Regardless of this, the majority of the women in her study had at some point taken part in sexual activity despite not wanting to, even if there was no obvious 'pressure or force' (Burkett, 2010: 65). Burkett (2010) therefore argued that there are constraints on female sexuality and decisions about whether to have sex or not are made against the backdrop of pressure to conform to gendered norms. These ideas surrounding consent and willingness to engage in sexual activity are explored in this study.

Age and Relationships

As well as gender, age is explored in this study. The chosen population for the interviews was young adults aged 18-25. Young people and young adults are problematic terms. These terms often refer to individuals aged between 16 and 25, 'a

time frame that bears no relation to diverse legal classifications of adulthood' and differences between young people in terms of social location are masked by terms such as these (Valentine, 2003: 38). 'We also need to question to what extent social categories such as gender, race, class and sexuality actually have any meaning for young people as they grow up' (Valentine, 2003: 49). According to Arnett (2000: 469), in the West, the period of an individual's life between the ages of 18 and 25 can be considered 'a distinct period of the life course'. Arnett (2000: 469) calls the period of an individual's life between the ages of 18 and 25 'emerging adulthood' as individuals between these ages are no longer bound by the rules of childhood, but neither do they have the same duties as adults. Not only is this period 'culturally constructed', individuals between these ages have many ways of living and may or may not be working or in education (Arnett, 2000: 470-471; Valentine, 2003: 38). Arnett (2000) argues that during these years, relationships are not practised for adulthood, but rather as just for the here-and-now. It is a time for romantic and sexual 'experimentation' when there is less 'parental surveillance' and less 'pressure to enter marriage' (Arnett, 2000: 474). Arnett (2000) does acknowledge that, during this period of life, there are individual differences depending on social location, but he argues that this period is worthy of research because diverse experiences are the norm.

Relationships start in the teenage years and progress as individuals enter their twenties, 'often leading to cohabitation, joint parenthood and marriage' (Meier and Allen, 2008: 26) and Fischer (1981: 11) has described this as 'one of the more important transitions' that young people go through as they approach adulthood. These relationships differ from young adults' other relationships in that sex can be a part of these relationships (Meier and Allen, 2008). During teenage and young adulthood, women and men become aware of their sexualities, which are considered a normal part of adult life; young adults are compelled to conform to 'a biologically determined model of heterosexuality' if they want to be considered a legitimate adult (Fraser, 1999: 19). Collins (2003: 2) explains that 'romantic relationships... are voluntary interactions that are mutually acknowledged, rather than identified by only

one member of the pair' and that these relationships are considered normal in the teenage years. However, these relationships are under-researched (Collins, 2003). It is therefore important that relationships of younger adults are given time for investigation. The next section looks at violence within the relationships of younger people.

Violence in Younger People's Relationships

Although violence against women is a focal point for much feminist work, violence in the relationships of younger people has received relatively little consideration in the United Kingdom (Barter, 2009). This is surprising, considering statistical data from the United Kingdom confirm that younger people are more likely to experience victimisation in their relationships than those in older age groups. The *Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2016* release (ONS, 2017) shows that 10% of young women aged 16-19 and 8.6% of young women aged 20-24 were victims of violence within their relationships in the past twelve months, compared 5.8% of women aged 55-59 (ONS, 2017). Although the figures are lower for young men, 6.7% of 16-19-year-old young men and 5.3% of 20-24-year-old men were victims of domestic abuse compared to 2.2% of men aged 55-59 (ONS, 2017). The statistics also show that 11% of young women aged 16-19 and 7.6% of women aged 20-24 had been sexually assaulted in the past twelve months, in comparison to 1.6% of women aged 35-44 (ONS, 2017). In addition, the *An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales Statistics Bulletin* released in 2013 (ONS, 2013: 8) shows that 16 out of the 19 'offenders [who] were cautioned for rape' in 2011 were below 18 years old. The bulletin also shows, again, that females aged 16-19 were more likely to be sexually victimised than older age groups (ONS, 2013). Although the figures on sexual offending do not directly relate to violence in the intimate relationships of young people, they do show a concerning rate of victimisation amongst younger people and show a need for more research into the violence experienced by younger people in the United Kingdom. These statistics are

vital in revealing the prevalence of abusive experiences. However, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, prevalence rates do little in regards to highlighting the frequency, severity, impact or pattern nature of abuse within relationships.

In addition to the above statistics, two Serious Case Reviews were conducted in 2016 into the cases of two seventeen-year-old women who were murdered by their partners (Jeremiah and Nicolas, 2016; Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, 2016). Both young women were known to Children and Young People's Services, as well as other agencies. These reviews examined the actions taken by the agencies whose actions failed to prevent the deaths of two young women as a direct result of domestic violence (Jeremiah and Nicolas, 2016; Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, 2016). Working with, and supporting, young victims of domestic violence requires a nuanced approach, as these reports show (Jeremiah and Nicolas, 2016; Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, 2016); agencies who work with these young victims must recognise them both as victims of abuse as well as young people who need safeguarding.

Again, much of the research that has examined violence in younger people's relationships has been based in the United States and has concentrated on 'prevalence rates', rather than 'experiences' (Barter et al., 2009: 7-9). Some of these studies report that girls and boys are abused equally in their intimate relationships (Foshee, 1996; Halpern et al., 2001) and girls are more likely to report that they perpetrate violence in their intimate relationships than boys (Foshee, 1996; Jackson, 1999). However, girls are more likely to be injured than boys (Foshee, 1996) and girls are more likely to experience sexual violence than boys (Foshee, 1996; Jackson, 1999). Similarly, Fox et al. (2013), through questionnaires completed in the UK with young people aged 13-14, found that girls' and boys' rates of victimisation were similar for both physical and emotional abuse, but girls experienced more sexual abuse. However, Fox et al. (2013: 12) state that the 'impact' of victimisation may differ between girls and boys. One

explanation for girls reporting perpetrating more violence in their relationships may be that society is less tolerant of violent behaviour towards women by men than vice versa (Foshee, 1996; Jackson, 1999). As these studies are based on the self-reporting of violence, boys may not be reporting the true extent of their violence (Foshee, 1996; Jackson, 1999). Hamby and Turner (2013) used data from 1680 young people aged twelve to seventeen taken from the American National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV). The NatSCEV asks questions about many different types of violent behaviour and information about the context surrounding violence, including questions about 'fear' and 'injury' (Hamby and Turner, 2013: 333-334). They found that changing the 'inclusion criteria affected male rates more than female rates', as 'so many women reported fear, injury or sexual victimisation'. (Hamby and Turner, 2013: 334). When 'fear, injury and sexual victimisation' were included in the criteria for domestic violence in teenage relationships, male rates of victimisation decreased, whereas female rates did not. Hamby and Turner (2013: 335) contend that we need to be clear about how we define and measure violence in teenage relationships if we want an accurate picture of violence in teenage relationships. Foshee (1996) and Jackson (1999) both argue that we need more research into why violence takes place and why girls and boys are violent in order to understand the differences between girls and boys and their abusive behaviours.

In addition, Jackson (1999) and Hamby and Turner (2013) argue that we need more qualitative studies. Sears et al. (2006) used qualitative research and conducted focus groups with school students in Canada and found that although boys and girls use physical and psychological violence in their relationships, girls and boys differ in what they believe to be abuse. Boys defined abuse as behaviour that was intended to harm them, where girls saw behaviour that did harm them in some way as abusive (Sears et al., 2006). Similarly, in Burman and Cartmel's (2005) study of young people's attitudes towards gendered violence, it was found that young women were more likely to label abusive behaviours from partners as domestic violence than their male counterparts.

In a later study, Sears, Byers and Price (2007) found that 26% of girls, compared to 19%

of boys, reported using multiple forms of violence in their intimate relationships. Therefore, more research into how violence in younger people's relationships is gendered is needed.

Barter et al. (2009: 12) conducted the first 'in-depth' research project in the UK that examined 'young people's experiences of partner violence'. Barter et al. (2009) conducted 1,353 self-completion surveys in 8 schools with 680 girls and 669 boys, as well as 91 semi-structured interviews in 6 schools with 62 girls and 29 boys. Participants in the study were aged 13-17. They found that 25% of girls experienced physical violence, compared to 18% of boys; and 11% of girls experienced 'severe physical violence', compared to 4% of boys (Barter et al, 2009: 44). Three quarters of the girls who had suffered physical violence reported that it impacted them negatively; this was the case for 14% of the boys (Barter et al, 2009). Emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse experienced by teenagers, mainly through coercive control; 31% of girls and 6% of boys were impacted by this and this was the first time in the UK that evidence has been found for coercive control in young people's relationships (Barter et al, 2009). This is vital for this study, as if coercive control is evident in the relationships of teenagers, it is likely to be present in the relationships of young adults. What is expected to differ is the ways coercive control can play out in relationships of young adults of different ages.

Almost twice the number of girls compared to boys had experienced sexual violence, and 70% of girls compared to 13% of boys reported being negatively affected because of this sexual violence (Barter, et al., 2009). In an earlier study, Hird (2000: 74) also found that most of the girls interviewed had been 'pressured, coerced or forced to engage in some form of sexual activity'. In all cases, girls were more likely to have been adversely affected by the abuse suffered (Barter et al., 2009), which was also found by Hird (2000). Similarly, Jackson, Cram and Seymour (2000), in their study on violence and sexual coercion with high school students in New Zealand, found that although

rates of violence victimisation between girls and boys were similar, more girls were affected emotionally by this violence. Love was used as a manipulation technique within relationships to sustain abusive relationship and as a sexual coercion tool (Barter et al., 2009).

Barter et al. (2015) conducted the safeguarding teenagers' intimate relationships (STIR) study: a pan-European study looking at the connections between online and offline abuse in the relationships of young people aged 13-19. This was done by combining a survey of 4564 young people with 91 semi-structured interviews, in five different countries. The survey sample had near-equal numbers of females and males, whilst the interview sample had a female majority: 67 females compared to 24 males (Barter et al., 2015). The survey showed that although more young women in England reported experiencing abuse within their relationships, they were also more likely to report perpetrating all forms of violence except sexual violence (Barter et al., 2015). However, more young women stated that abuse had an adverse effect on them (Barter et al., 2015). Barter et al. (2009: 148) also found that young people often did not equate their experiences to abuse, and that their experiences were considered a 'normal' part of their relationships. This was also found in Barter et al.'s (2015: 54) interviews, as participants saw physical violence as a 'normal', 'understandable reaction' to relationship conflicts. The normalisation of this violence relates to Stark's (2007) typology of coercive control, as he recognises that it can be difficult to establish whether coercive control is involved or whether women are conforming to traditional female roles. The young women who experience abuse from their partners may well perceive this abuse as an extension of what is considered 'normal' masculinity within intimate relationships and so may feel as though they have no reason to question such behaviour.

Emotional violence was also the most common form of abuse experienced in Wood et al.'s (2011: 6) 'first UK research to focus on disadvantaged young people's experiences in their intimate relationships' and in Fox et al.'s (2013) study. Wood et al (2011: 15)

defined a disadvantaged young person as 'any young person who has experienced a particularly complex or disrupted childhood which may have disadvantaged their welfare'. They found that 67% of the girls said that they had experienced 'emotional abuse', mainly 'controlling behaviour', compared to a third of the boys. (Wood et al., 2011: 8). Girls expressed this adversely impacted them and 50% of the girls believed that this was a 'normal' part of their relationships (Wood et al., 2011: 8). Some of the girls suggested that this control was their partner expressing affection (Wood et al., 2011). In a study with American university students who were asked to recall violence in their relationships between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, psychological or emotional violence was usually experienced for the first time at an earlier age than any other form of domestic violence (Bonomi et al., 2012). Fifty per cent of the girls in Wood et al.'s (2011) study also stated that they had been a victim of sexual violence. Likewise, Barter et al. (2015) found that most of the young people who took part in the interviews had experienced some kind of emotional violence and that sexual coercion was normal for young people in their study. Dominant constructions of femininity and masculinity were used to defend 'controlling behaviours, sexual pressure and coercion' (Aghtaie, 2018: 307).

Although Bowen et al. (2013) found that participants often did not consider abusive and coercive behaviours within relationships to be justified, participants did justify abusive behaviours and coercion in certain conditions. These conditions included if a partner was cheating; if the behaviour was meant in jest; if the behaviour was not meant to be intentionally harmful; if the behaviour was seen as less aggressive, for example some physically abusive behaviours were seen as more vicious than others and these were less likely to be condoned; and what happens as a result of the abusive behaviour, for instance abuse that causes bodily harm were less likely to be excused (Bowen et al., 2013). Therefore, participants were able to recognise abusive behaviours and considered these behaviours to be wrong, but simultaneously designated behaviours as abusive only when carried out in certain conditions, showing contradictory ideas about what is acceptable behaviour within relationships (Bowen et

al., 2013). Similarly, McCarry and Lombard (2016) found that children and young people in their studies equated domestic violence with physical violence and domestic abuse with other forms of violence, which they did not consider to be as harmful. Again, these children and young people justified violence based on the victim's behaviour; if the victim defied their abuser or if infidelity was present in the relationship violence was seen as more acceptable (McCarry and Lombard, 2016).

Hird and Jackson (2001), using data from their respective research in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, found that many of the reasons for sexual coercion were explained as being 'normal', based on biological differences between women and men: that multiple sexual encounters are an expression of masculinity. Boys justify sexual coercion by claiming that girls 'are responsible for both simulating and satisfying men's sexual urges' (Hird and Jackson, 2001: 34). 'Hormones' and an 'overpowering sexual need' were reasons that boys gave in defence of rape (Hird and Jackson, 2001: 36). As Lees (1993: 241) argues, this removes the responsibility for boys' 'sexual behaviour' from boys, as it is assumed that it is 'uncontrollable'.

Love

The girls in Hird and Jackson's (2001: 37-38) studies reported 'constant pressure to engage in sexual activity' and stated that boys often used 'love as a coercive tool' to show their commitment by engaging in sexual activity. Chung (2005) conducted interviews with 40 ethnically diverse young people (25 female and 15 male) in Australia aged 15-19. In this sample, ten young women had experienced abuse, which was physical, sexual and/or emotional (Chung, 2005). Chung (2005: 449) also found that girls described the 'policing of their behaviour or clothes' as affection, rather than controlling and boys said 'they used romantic love to coerce young women into sex'. For a fair number of young women in Burman and Cartmel's (2005: 43) study 'coercive

sex is normalised'. A more recent study with girls aged 11-16 conducted by Hlavka (2014: 343) found that girls saw 'boys and men as natural sexual aggressors', so violence was considered normal. This normalisation was perpetuated by 'peer groups' and was rarely reported as it was not considered to be worthy of reporting (Hlvaka, 2014: 346). Victim-blame was also common, and girls were considered responsible for preventing their own victimisation, so girls resisted reporting in case they gained a negative sexual reputation (Hlvaka, 2014). Again, this links with Stark's (2007) argument that coercive control remains hidden from view in relationships, as many of its aspects can be considered an extension of what is considered 'normal' behaviour for females and males within relationships. Chung (2005: 450) explains that gender inequalities are played out in intimate relationships and that equality 'depends on disrupting hegemonic heterosexual masculinity'. However, Chung (2005) also found that those young women who had been in abusive relationships did not consider themselves to be victims; they used their experiences to inform their relationship choices.

Violence in the relationships of the younger people studied above is important for this study, as the age group of those studied overlaps with the target population.

Normalised coercion and control, considered to be a normal part of loving relationships, were prominent theme within these younger people's relationships. This study seeks to find out whether Stark's typology of coercive control can be used to establish how violence in young adults' relationships is gendered. The links between love and control are also studied, including how constructions of love might tie young adults into abusive relationships, as well as aiming to look at whether the relationships of young adults consist of behaviours that young adults consider to be related to love, but can also be part of the pattern of coercive control. This 'love' theme will now be explored.

One of the mechanisms of control that have been highlighted by the studies above is the idea of love within intimate relationships. There are problems with attempting to

define love, so few theorists have chosen to do so (Jackson, 1993). What love means is often contested (Fraser, 2003), but there are some points of agreement. Heterosexual love has been given special significance in our culture (Reiss, 1960). Love is important in the West and it is accepted that there is a suitable partner in the world for everyone and 'that love is forever; that love is based on monogamy, fidelity, privacy and loyalty; and that such love is essential to self-fulfilment' (Donovan and Hester, 2011: 83). 'Falling in love' is seen as 'compelling, overwhelming, uncontrollable, inexplicable and ecstatic', different to the love that individuals have for friends and family (Jackson, 1993: 207) and is used as an excuse for acting in ways that may not usually be deemed acceptable (Fraser, 1999). Love is also seen as the basis for sexual relationships (Jackson, 1993) and a life devoid of love is considered unfulfilled (Fraser, 1999; 2005). In addition, Bawin-Legros (2004: 241) has suggested that 'romantic love in its ideological narrative presumes that a durable emotional tie can be established with someone on the basis of intrinsic qualities, qualities that serve as the tie itself'.

Love infiltrates every aspect of contemporary society and is inescapable (Jackson, 1993: 202; Bawin-Legros, 2004: 241). It is apparent in all forms of media: 'in songs, poems, dramas, operas, fairytales and films' as well as 'in the form of biographies' (Bawin-Legros, 2004: 241). These media constructions create the impression that anyone can fall in love and that these pictures of romance are how love between women and men *should* be (Towns and Adams, 2000; Bawin-Legros, 2004). Ultimately, love is seen as 'feminine' (Cancian, 1986; Fraser, 2003) and 'for women love and fidelity are part of their socialisation process' (Bawin-Legros, 2003: 244). Women are socialised into being dependent whereas men are socialised into being independent (Cancian, 1986). Fairytales which portray a 'Prince' who saves his 'Princess', are 'commonly depicted as the perfect-love' (Towns and Adams, 2000: 568). These fairytales can be considered a kind of romantic education (Jackson, 1993). Towns and Adams (2000: 559) therefore suggest that these media constructions of romantic love between women and men 'have implications for gender politics'. However, sociology and other social science disciplines have had little interest in analysing love in personal

relationships (Dunscombe and Marsden, 1993; Jackson, 1993; Fraser, 2003; Bawin-Legros, 2004) and this is because it is not seen as fitting with the scientific model of social science (Fraser, 2003). Bawin-Legros (2004: 242) has argued for the study of love as love can be expressed in 'words, gestures and acts' and so it can be 'studied in concrete ways through surveys or in-depth interviews'.

Giddens (1992) has argued that more relationships today can be characterised as a 'pure relationship'. Giddens (1992: 58) defines a 'pure relationship' as 'a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it'. A 'pure relationship' is based on 'confluent love', which is dependent upon those involved and what they want from the relationship, not premised on the idea that the relationship will be life-long and based on 'equality in emotional give and take' and 'sexual pleasure' (Giddens, 1992: 62). Key to the formation of the 'pure relationship', according to Giddens, is the rise in 'plastic sexuality', characterised by women in contemporary society being able to experience sex in the same way as men – for pleasure, not as a route into motherhood (Giddens, 1992: 2). However, Jamieson (1999: 484) argues that Giddens ignores the fact that men usually have more 'power' in relationships. She argues that the 'pure relationship' is unlikely when couples are joined together economically and 'share responsibility' for domestic and other duties, as these, as well as who does what in a relationship, become part of the relationship, as well as affecting how equal the relationship is (Jamieson, 1999: 490). Some couples still subscribe to ideas that women should be responsible for all domestic duties, while men should take control financially, for example. Giddens also seems to ignore the evidence which suggests, as discussed above, that women are still not considered to be sexually free, as women who display sexuality are considered deviant, as they defy dominant norms of femininity. Therefore, Jamieson (1999: 491) contends that 'relationships are still highly gendered' and most couples are not attempting to overthrow these gendered inequalities within relationships.

In terms of love within (heterosexual) relationships, Jackson (1993) has argued that one usually loves the other more, or gives more emotionally than the other, in a relationship. Dunscombe and Marsden (1993: 222) suggest that 'conflict arises' due to 'gender differences in emotional behaviour in love and intimacy'. Dunscombe and Marsden (1993) interviewed couples and found some women felt lonely even though they were in relationships and that they felt they loved their partners more than their partners loved them. The women said their partners often put other aspects of their lives before love and intimacy in their relationships, but the women saw themselves as at fault for wanting more of an emotional attachment within their relationship (Dunscombe and Marsden, 1993). Men stated that they preferred to keep their emotions to themselves, though said they were present and saw women as demanding in their quest to be more fulfilled emotionally (Dunscombe and Marsden, 1993). Dunscombe and Marsden (1993) suggest that this implies that women see love and emotion as more important than men do and more women want to express these emotions within their relationships. They saw this as being related to differences in 'power' in relationships; if relationships were equal, women and men would give the same emotionally (Dunscombe and Marsden, 1993: 236).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) have argued that people expect too much from love and this often leads to disappointment. They posit that 'love is religion after religion' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 12); that love has become a replacement for widespread worship – everyone seems to believe in love and everyone wants love. When in love, it is expected that you revolve your life around one person and this leaves individuals 'vulnerable' (Jackson, 1993: 210-211). Others see love as detrimental to the lives of women. For example, Bawin-Legros (2004) suggests that romantic love has aided in the subordination of women, and Smart (2007: 61) argues that love is an 'ideological mask for the economic, sexual and physical exploitation of women by men'. Women are *usually* considered to be responsible for the emotional 'practices of

love', whereas men are considered responsible for 'practical expressions of love' (Donovan and Hester, 2011: 86). Though, it is who is giving more emotionally in relationships, rather than gender, that is important when looking at abusive relationships (Donovan and Hester, 2011; 2014). Gendered expressions and practices of love will be looked at in this study when investigating what love means to young adults. It will become clear as to whether love means different things to women and men.

Some, such as Diamond (2004: 116), have posited that love should be considered as distinct from 'sexual desire' and that 'there are gender differences in the interrelationship between love and desire that may have both biological and cultural origins'. She explains that 'sexual desire typically denotes a need or drive to seek out sexual objects or to engage in sexual activities, whereas romantic love typically denotes the powerful feelings of emotional infatuation and attachment between intimate partners' (Diamond, 2004: 116). Diamond (2004: 118) argues that there may be 'biological factors' involved in the process of romantic love and the reasons why women apparently experience romantic love in a different way, though the evidence she cites is based on animal research. She suggests that women's 'greater experience of links between love and desire... may be influenced by oxytocin's joint, gender-specific role in these processes' and she only suggests this is in combination with 'culture and socialisation' within brackets after her claim (Diamond, 2004: 116). Diamond (2004) uses the example that women have more affectionate relationships with their female friends than men generally do with their male friends. Though she does add that this tends to be more socially acceptable for women than for men, she does not seem to consider that this may be just as important (if not more important) than biological reasons between differences in female-female and male-male relationships. Diamond's argument verges on being biologically deterministic. She contends that more research is needed with **humans** to find out the biological processes involved in romantic love (Diamond, 2004). This is especially important as many of the claims she makes are based on research conducted on animals! One might

argue that these arguments, such as women being more inclined to link love with sexual desire than men, serve as another way in which women are defined and controlled by their bodies and their sexuality.

Love and Abuse

Love is often seen as the opposite to abuse (Borochowitz and Eisikovits, 2002; Fraser, 2003; Fraser, 2005), but there has been *some* research into how love and emotion are used to sustain violent relationships. Fraser (2005), who is a social worker, explains that women she has spoken to have told her that love and abuse exist together in their relationships. Abusive relationships mostly start off as loving relationships and in between episodes of abuse, romantic love from abusive partners succeeds in making decisions to leave for the victim difficult (Fraser, 2005). The women Fraser (2005) spoke to believed that they should try to make their relationships work, so it did not look as though they had just given up. They found it difficult to realise that jealousy was not love and they had 'hope' that the abuse would subside in the future (Fraser, 2005: 15-16). Borochowitz and Eisikovits (2002) interviewed Jewish married couples aged 19-49 in Israel, where women had been victimised by their male partners, to find out about love within their relationships. Many of the women claimed that love was important in their relationships, preventing them from leaving (Borochowitz and Eisikovits, 2002). Likewise, Baley (2010: 2303) found that his female interviewees also invoked 'romantic discourse', even if sometimes they rejected romance as 'fantasy'. Participants said they put their relationships before their own needs and they felt 'guilty, ashamed or weak' if they could not make their relationships work (Baley, 2010: 2305).

In 2014, Donovan and Hester published the findings of their study comparing heterosexual and same-sex abuse in relationships (COHSAR) (Donovan and Hester, 2014). This was a mixed methods study, combining a survey exploring abuse in 746

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non-heterosexual participants relationships, with 68 in-depth interviews with heterosexual and non-heterosexual women and men (Donovan and Hester, 2014). The survey sample were aged 16-69, 95% white and included 61% female and 38% male participants, along with four participants who identified as transgender and 1 participant who identified as queer (Donovan and Hester, 2014). The interview sample were aged 19-64 and almost all white. In terms of gender and sexuality, 20 lesbians (including one transgender lesbian), 19 gay men, 14 heterosexual women 19 heterosexual men, 3 bisexual women and 3 queer women (Donovan and Hester). They found that violence in same-sex relationships was comparable to violence in heterosexual relationships, with many abusive behaviours being experienced (Donovan and Hester, 2014). More than a third of those surveyed had experienced abuse and a fifth of all survey participants had experienced coercive control (Donovan and Hester, 2014). Gender is an important factor when predicting abuse in all forms of relationships, but other factors such as homophobia, age, income and education are just as important in same-sex relationships (Donovan and Hester, 2014). Those aged under 35 were more likely to have experienced abuse (Donovan and Hester, 2014).

Donovan and Hester (2011: 81) state that 'gender is important to understanding abusive relationships but so too are the differences in expectations of practices of love brought to relationships'. Indeed, Donovan and Hester (2014: 155) propose that there are two 'relationship rules' embedded in abusive relationships: 1. 'The relationship is for the abusive partner and on their terms'; and 2. 'The victim/survivor is responsible for the care of the abusive partner.' Therefore, the abuser holds all the power in the relationship and the victim provides all the emotion work. Love works in these relationships to convince the victim that they are needed by their abuser and the signs of abuse go unrecognised as they are mistaken for signs that their partners cares for and needs them (Donovan and Hester, 2014). This led to some participants feeling as though they had the upper-hand emotionally, thus they did not see themselves as victims as they believed they were accountable for the relationship and whether it survived (Donovan and Hester, 2014).

The abusive partner used love to further their own wants and needs, for example, the abusive partner often told the victimised partner that they loved them or needed them when the relationship was ending; love was used to prevent the victimised partner from leaving the relationship or revealing the abuse to others (Donovan and Hester, 2011; 2014). Love, therefore, was used as a form of control to help make sure that the relationship remained intact and the abuse remained hidden. This helps to explain why some women remain in abusive relationships (Donovan and Hester, 2011; 2014) and is an important foundation for this current study.

Emotion Work in Abusive Relationships

Hochschild (1979: 561) defined 'emotion work' as 'the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling', which entails keeping feelings in check and keeping bad feelings away. In the 1970s, Hochschild (2003: 12) conducted a survey with 261 students to investigate how women and men 'experience emotion and manage it'. Hochschild (2003: 13) detailed how her participants spoke of trying to 'fall in love' and fall out of it. She explains that by 'managing feeling', we can produce a certain emotion (Hochschild, 2003: 18). Therefore, by attempting to feel love for someone, we can end up creating a love for someone. To do this, Hochschild (2003: 18) explains, we use 'feeling rules' which are associated with that emotion; we focus on feelings that are synonymous with the emotion that we are trying to generate, prompting ourselves to feel in a way we believe we should for this emotion to develop. This emotion work, however, is seen as women's work (Donovan and Hester, 2011); women are considered responsible for providing all the emotional labour within relationships.

Enander (2011: 31) looked at 'emotion work' in terms of abusive relationships. Enander (2011) conducted 47 interviews with women aged 24-61 years old in Sweden. She used Hochschild's framework and the story of 'Jekyll and Hyde' to explain how women in her study often explained that they fell in love with 'good' men originally and later, when they became abusive, women saw their male partners as both good and bad, then sometimes entirely bad (Enander, 2011: 36). In terms of relationships,

Enander (2011: 30) suggests that individuals 'follow the feeling rules of love and commitment' to foster feelings that deem appropriate for a relationship to carry on. The women in her study believed that their partners were good, even when they were being abusive, so used emotion work in terms of focusing on the good parts of their partner to sustain the relationship (Enander, 2011). Later, when the abusive behaviour was more common the women realised that their partners could not be good, and so used emotion work by associating bad feelings with their abusive partners to prevent themselves from falling in love again (Enander, 2011). The participants at first were minimising abuse, but when their partners became mainly abusive, the women actively sought to fall out of love with their partners (Enander, 2011). Enander (2011: 44) therefore asserts that 'emotion work' is used to both sustain and end a relationship.

Similarly, Towns and Adams (2000) argue that ideas surrounding romantic love keep women in abusive relationships by masking abuse, as well as preventing outsiders from being able to help. Using in-depth, 'loosely structured' interviews with women in New Zealand, Towns and Adams (2000: 560) argue that romantic love prevents women from talking about violence and from leaving abusive relationships. The women often divide their abusive partners into two people - 'the good and the bad' - but believe that their partner is good (Towns and Adams, 2000: 566). Some women believed that violence could be prevented by being more loving and so blamed themselves for violence, as they were not loving enough (Towns and Adams, 2000). If anyone outside of the relationship suggests the women should leave, 'the onus falls on the women to provide the perfect-love, to prove to the men (and others) that she is capable of providing a perfect-love' (Towns and Adams, 2000: 580). This, therefore, encourages the women to become more loving and to remain in the abusive relationship (Towns and Adams, 2000). Again, we can see here how the women used emotion work by aligning themselves to the feeling rules of romantic love; focusing on the good in their partner and diminishing the bad to sustain the relationship.

Emotion work was also present amongst the young women in Chung's (2005) study. The young women believed that relationships between women and men should be based on equality, so they used emotion work to minimise abuse and present a loving front in a way to make their relationships *appear* as though they were equal (Chung, 2005; 2007). However, Chung (2005; 2007) also explains that these young women felt the onus was on them to keep the relationship going; the women felt it was their responsibility to make the relationship work. Donovan and Hester (2011: 99) argue that 'identifying who is doing the emotion work and who is exploiting these practices of love regardless of gender or sexuality' helps us to understand the mechanisms of abusive relationships.

Love, abuse and Young Adults

There has been very little research into how love works in young adults' relationships, but there are a few notable studies that can be considered. Jackson (2001: 308) interviewed young women aged 16-18 about their relationships. She found that many of the young women were in conflict with friends or family when their relationships began and so were 'vulnerable' (Jackson, 2001). The relationships made them feel better at first, but meant they had no one to turn to when the relationship went bad (Jackson, 2001). The young women did not realise they were being abused while in the relationship and many had excuses for their boyfriends' behaviour, which often involved blaming themselves for the abuse (Jackson, 2001). The young women did not want to label their boyfriends as 'abusers' and themselves as 'victims' (Jackson, 2001: 314). By not wanting to label themselves or their boyfriends, this enabled domestic violence to remain hidden (Jackson, 2001). The young women also told how ending the relationship was not easy because the young women did not want to hurt their boyfriends or their boyfriends' behaviour became coercive or frightening when they tried to leave (Jackson, 2001). Again, the young women put the needs of their boyfriends before their own (Jackson, 2001).

Wood (2001: 240) studied what women believe domestic violence means in their relationships and how constructions of gender help to reinforce the idea that violence in relationships is 'normal'. She interviewed twenty women who had been emotionally or physically victimised in their relationships (Wood, 2001). The twenty female participants were aged 20-53 and recounted details of relationships they were in anywhere from aged fourteen to thirty-two (Wood, 2001). She found that many of the women attempted to construct their relationships as fitting the romantic ideal, even when their male partners had been violent (Wood, 2001). Every woman in the study stated that their relationship had begun as 'fairytale romances' and the women stressed how important it was to find the perfect boyfriend (Wood, 2001: 249). Even when these women were being abused, the women believed that love would get them through it (Wood, 2001). The women still considered their relationships to be perfect because they thought things could be worse, which was bolstered by the stories of abuse they had heard from other women (Wood, 2001). The violence received was not seen as a reason to end the relationship and the women became so used to the violence, they saw the violence as 'normal' (Wood, 2001: 251). Many of the abusive partners were more loving after they had been violent and the women in this study concentrated on the good parts of the relationship, which they believed more than countered the violence (Wood, 2001). The participants removed the blame from their abusive partners by blaming themselves for not making sure their partners were happy, stating that being violent was 'not the real him', that the abusive partners were not 'responsible' for their own behaviour (Wood, 2001: 252). Most of the women in the study believed that relationships need to be worked at to survive and saw episodic violence as a 'normal' part of any relationship. (Wood, 2001: 253). Again, this was further normalised by the fact that these women often witnessed other female friends and relatives having the same experience in their relationships (Wood, 2001). The women believed the violence occurred because they had done something wrong or as punishment for behaviour that their partner did not agree with (Wood, 2001). Some women also stated that they did not think they could end the relationship, they based their self-confidence on having a boyfriend and so wanted to keep their boyfriends at all costs (Wood, 2001).

Similarly, in Kearney's (2001) study of thirteen North American qualitative research reports looking at women aged 16-67's experiences of domestic violence, she found that domestic violence was often considered normal by the victims/survivors, as well as other people around them. Common reasons for staying in abusive relationships included self-blame, shunning by families if they were to leave, fear of what the abuser would do and 'enduring love' (Kearney, 2001: 275). Kearney (2001: 275) considered 'enduring love' to be the 'continual struggle to redefine partner violence as temporary, survivable or reasonable by adhering to values of commitment and self-sacrifice in the relationship and by using strategies to survive and control the psychic and physical harm of unpredictable abuse'. Women concentrated on getting through abusive situations believing that their relationships would improve in the future, as they wanted the love of their partners even though they were being abused (Kearney, 2001).

Using a 'retrospective approach', Toscano (2014: 66-67) interviewed young women aged 18-20 years old about violence in their teenage relationships and found that although they had been abused, young women 'still believed in romance and talked about romantic ideals'. The young women explained that they stayed within relationships 'due to this focus on romance', even though some knew it was a 'fantasy' (Toscano, 2014: 67). Control was present from the beginning of their relationships, surveillance from partners was common, but some saw this control as a sign of love (Toscano, 2014). The young women explained how they felt responsible for trying to change their boyfriends' behaviour; they did not see their boyfriends as being accountable for their behaviour and hoped that the romantic love they had once experienced would return (Toscano, 2014). Here we can see the parallels between how love works in the adult relationships explained above and young people's relationships. This means we need to consider if there are any other similarities between adult and younger people's relationships.

Chung (2007) used findings from her semi-structured interviews with twenty-five young women in Australia to show how women experience relationships and abuse. She found that twenty-two of the young women believed it was important to have a boyfriend (Chung, 2007). Those who had boyfriends saw their friends less often, as they put their boyfriend's 'needs' above their own (Chung, 2007: 1278). Ten young women had been victimised by a boyfriend (Chung, 2007) and many of the young women saw violent behaviour such as 'yelling or controlling' behaviour as their boyfriend being 'protective' and 'a sign of his love' (Chung, 2007: 1279). Chung (2007: 1282) describes how there was a 'confusion between intimacy and control'; any act of violence or controlling behaviour was considered proof of love. Justifications for the violence were given by the young women and they often blamed themselves (Chung, 2007). Many of the young women only revealed the abuse when the relationship was over, because, as found in other studies, the women did not want to be labelled as 'victims' (Chung, 2007: 1285). This is because there is now an assumption that all relationships are 'equal', so the young women cannot be seen to be victimised (Chung, 2007: 1288). Because of this perceived equality, young women believe that remaining in an abusive relationship is a choice and see domestic violence as an individual problem rather than a gendered issue. Stark (2007) highlighted that many victims of coercive controlling behaviour do not want to be labelled victims in a society that values female self-sufficiency, as this can mean the women feel like failures. Again, this helps to keep domestic violence hidden.

Towns and Scott (2013: 537) looked at how 'young women's experiences of 'ownership' in heterosexual relationships parallel the experiences of victims/survivors of men's domestic violence towards women'. They used 'ownership' to denote 'young women's experiences of their heterosexual partner's possessive, jealous and/or controlling practices' (Towns and Scott, 2013: 537). Towns and Scott (2013: 539-540) conducted focus groups with young women in New Zealand aged between eighteen

and twenty-five, who had experienced 'ownership' in their relationships. Towns and Scott (2013: 541) used 'ownership entitlement' when describing how the young women explained the common theme of 'their boyfriends acting on decisions without consultation with them which affected their agency or autonomy'. Surveillance was another common theme within the young women's discussions, through constant telephone calls or internet stalking (Towns and Scott, 2013). The young women also spoke of what Towns and Scott (2013: 544) term 'identity ownership', whereby: the young women's dress style was controlled by their boyfriends, preventing the young women from making decisions; women feeling they had to adapt their personalities for their boyfriends; women feeling that they could not socialise with who they wanted to; and 'ever-changing rules' which women had to follow (Towns and Scott, 2013: 548). These controlling behaviours affected the women's self-confidence (Towns and Scott, 2013). Many of the women did not notice that their boyfriend was being controlling until the relationship had ended, even though some of the women explained how they often did not go out or see friends and family (Towns and Scott, 2013). Towns and Scott (2013) suggest that these controlling behaviours may not be noticed, as they may be considered as part of a love relationship. Thus, they argue that, as these controlling behaviours are the same as behaviours witnessed by domestic violence victims, and that these behaviours can lead to domestic violence, 'intervention with such practices would be useful for prevention' (Towns and Scott, 2013: 551).

More recently, Papp et al. (2016) surveyed 275 women aged 18-50 in the USA, to examine how romantic beliefs can lead women to consider abusive behaviours to be demonstrative of love and whether this is related to victimisation. They found that 'holding romantic beliefs' correlated with considering controlling behaviours as romantic and considering controlling behaviours as romantic correlated with the women's experiences of being victimised in their relationships (Papp et al., 2016). Holding romantic beliefs meant the women were more accepting of controlling behaviours as part of a romantic relationship and so this was also linked to victimisation (Papp et al., 2016). Believing jealousy to be romantic was linked to

experiences of victimisation as well as believing that controlling behaviours were romantic (Papp et al., 2016). The authors explain that this link may be because the likelihood of accepting jealousy in a relationship increases if individuals consider jealousy to be a pro-romantic behaviour (Papp et al., 2016). Using these behaviours within relationships are deployed to control their victimised partners and prevent them from leaving; these behaviours are considered a normal part of relationships as women are socialised into accepting these behaviours (Papp et al., 2016).

A theme within these studies is that love has been used by abusive partners in order to isolate and control young women. Young women believe that controlling behaviour is 'normal' and means that their partner loves them, so they stay away from friends and family to spend time with their boyfriends instead. Keeping victims away from friends and family ensures the woman remains dependent on the abuser and removes avenues for seeking help (Stark, 2007). Isolation and control along with domestic violence are the three key markers that Stark (2007) uses to explain his position that coercive control is a liberty crime. We need to find out more about what love means in young adults' relationships to consider whether love is a key mechanism for coercive controlling behaviour and whether young people are also experiencing what Stark calls a liberty crime.

Reasons behind Abuse

Research into violence in teenage intimate relationships has looked at the reasons why some relationships become abusive whilst others do not. The main risk-factors for perpetrating violence in relationships have been highlighted in the literature as: holding sexist beliefs; the acceptability of violence; witnessing or experiencing violence; and having low self-esteem. Though, contact with violence in the media has also been highlighted as a risk-factor. Murnen et al. (2003: 363) analysed the results of

thirty-nine studies that examined the links between 'masculine ideology and sexual aggression'. They found that having sexist assumptions alone is unlikely to trigger males to participate in 'sexually abusive behaviour' and sexist beliefs should be looked at in addition to other 'factors' (Murnen, et al., 2003: 370).

Sundaram (2013) looked at how young people define violence, the acceptability of different forms of violence and the reasons behind this by conducting focus groups with fourteen to sixteen-year-old UK school students. She found that girls and boys defined the same behaviours as violent and considered violence a 'severe act' (Sundaram, 2013: 895). Both girls and boys considered violence to be a male behavioural trait, though 'low level' and 'emotional violence' were considered perpetrated by women (Sundaram, 2013: 896). Male-to-female violence was considered 'unacceptable', while female-to-male violence was 'more acceptable' (Sundaram, 2013: 896). This was explained as being because men can be a lot stronger than women and a woman would be 'non-threatening' to a man (Sundaram, 2013: 897). Likewise, violence between men was 'justified as part of an expected struggle for dominance and demonstration of power' (Sundaram, 2013: 897). Women's violence was seen as 'trivial', whilst male violence was about 'honour and pride', which were seen as 'important matters' (Sundaram, 2013: 901). Violence was simultaneously considered to be wrong, but also 'natural' for a man (Sundaram, 2013: 902).

Sears et al. (2007: 501) found that girls and boys who had experienced violence, whether within their families, in intimate relationships or from other young people, and were 'accepting' of violence in intimate relationships, were more likely to report that they had perpetrated violence in their intimate relationships. Girls who used psychological abuse in their relationships, but not physical abuse, reported that they had been victimised psychologically (Sears, et al., 2007). This suggests that these girls believe psychological abuse to be 'normal', as they had experienced it themselves. Likewise, boys who perpetrated sexual violence were 'more accepting' of sexually

violent behaviour and associated with other young people who they saw as sexually violent, suggesting that these boys see sexual violence as 'normal' behaviour (Sears, et al., 2007: 501). This implies that girls and boys who are surrounded by others who are violent or who have experienced violence themselves are more likely to perpetrate violence in their own intimate relationships as they consider abusive behaviour in relationships to be 'normal'. Capaldi et al. (2001: 70) also found that young men who abused their girlfriends had taken part in 'antisocial behaviours' and 'had expressed hostile attitudes' about women. Capaldi et al. (2001: 70) argue that violence against women and girls is not 'normal' behaviour for all young men; it is 'part of a deviant socialisation process'. This goes some way in explaining why not all young men go on to be abusive in their relationships.

Sutherland and Shepherd (2002: 433) explored the links between aggression and 'self-esteem and lack of self-concern'. Sutherland and Shepherd (2002: 439) used 'lack of self-concern' to mean 'the reverse of hypochondria', or 'those who have lower concerns for their welfare'. They found that both low levels of self-concern and low levels of self-esteem were linked to violent behaviour (Sutherland and Shepherd, 2002: 439). Sutherland and Shepherd (2002) therefore suggest that researchers should pay more attention to the reasons why some young people are violent, particularly in relation to self-esteem problems. Supporting this, Rosenfield et al. (2012) found that for young people involved in the American criminal justice system, experiencing stress is linked to perpetrating violence in teenage relationships.

Strouse et al. (1994: 563) investigated the links between 'involvement with pop music videos and family environment and attitudes toward[s] sexual harassment' in young people aged eleven to sixteen. They found that fewer young women than young men believed that sexual harassment was acceptable (Strouse et al., 1994). They also found that although both young women and men who watched more music videos were more accepting of sexual harassment, this was truer for the young women (Strouse et

al., 1994). The young women who watched the most music videos acceptance of sexual harassment was on a par with those of the young men who watched a lot of music videos (Strouse et al., 1994). Additionally, young women who had 'unsatisfactory family environments' and who also watched a lot of music videos had the same beliefs about sexual harassment as young men from the same family backgrounds and who watched a lot of music videos (Strouse et al., 1994: 575). However, Strouse et al. (1994) believe that the family is not as important as the influence of music videos. These results suggest that young women are more likely to believe that sexual harassment is 'normal' if they watch a lot of music videos, which Strouse et al. (1994: 574-575) suggest is 'male dominated' and 'sexist'. However, as these results are based on correlations, one cannot suggest that watching more music videos causes young women and young men to believe that sexual harassing behaviour is acceptable. Similarly, Friedlander et al. (2013: 310-311) looked at 'extensive and persistent aggressive media use as risk factors for teen dating violence in a longitudinal sample' by conducting surveys with young people from Canada aged fourteen to seventeen. They found that 'extensive and persistent exposure to aggressive acts in the media shapes adolescents' beliefs about the use of aggression with a partner' and increase the likelihood of teenagers perpetrating violence in their own relationships (Friedlander et al., 2013: 320).

Taket et al. (2010) argue that children who are abused are more likely to go on to experience violence in their own relationships. This could be due to learning that men are 'aggressors and sexually dominant' and women are 'passive and sexually subservient' (Taket et al., 2010: 62). Gadd et al. (2013: 4), in the third phase of the From Boys to Men Project, used the life-stories of thirty young men aged 16-21 years old to 'understand the experiences of people affected by domestic abuse'. The From Boys to Men Project was a three phase project 'to explore why some boys become domestic abuse perpetrators when others do not' (Gadd, et al., 2013: 1). All the young men in the third phase had experienced domestic violence as 'victim, witness or perpetrator' (Gadd et al., 2013: 2). They found that young men who witness abuse can

go on to abuse in their own relationships (Gadd et al., 2013). More than half of the young men had been physically abusive in their own relationships. Most of these young men did not take responsibility for this violence and victim-blaming was common (Gadd, et al., 2013). Weinehall (2005: 138) investigated fifteen and sixteen-year-old boys and girls in Sweden over five years to find out how young people 'experience and are affected by domestic violence'. The participants said that they did not want to repeat abusive behaviour or become victims of abuse themselves (Weinehall, 2005). However, some of the boys stated that they had been abusive in their own intimate relationships, but believed that their girlfriends were at fault for this violence (Weinehall, 2005). In addition, 50% of the girls reported being victimised in their own intimate relationships, but again, believed that the fault lay with themselves (Weinehall, 2005). Wolfe et al. (2001: 287) also found that boys who had experienced 'maltreatment' had an increased likelihood of being violent in their own intimate relationships. In order to 'extend the understanding' of the association of violence between parents and teenage relationship violence. Temple et al. (2013: 345) studied 'a large school-based sample of ethnically diverse adolescents' aged fourteen to sixteen. They confirmed there was a link between violence and teenage relationships and violence between parents. This was particularly the case for girls and boys who witness their mothers being violent towards their fathers (Temple, et al., 2013). Temple et al. (2013: 349) found that this link 'was fully explained by the acceptance of female violence (for girls) and the acceptance of male violence (for boys)'.

However, not all children who are abused or witness abuse will repeat the pattern and abusive behaviour is the result of a combination of 'factors' (Taket, et al., 2010: 47). O'Keefe (1998: 47) investigated these other factors by studying high-school students who had 'witnessed high levels of inter-parental violence'. Nearly half of these students had been abusive in their intimate relationships and 55% had been victimised in their intimate relationships (O'Keefe, 1998). It was found that boys who had high levels of 'self-esteem' and girls who did well in school were less likely to perpetrate

violence in their own relationships (O'Keefe, 1998: 50). However, O'Keefe (1998: 52) found that 'low economic status, exposure to community and school violence and acceptance of violence in dating relationships' increased the likelihood of boys perpetrating violence in their intimate relationships. This could be because witnessing violence may increase its acceptability and the anxiety of 'low economic status' can impede on 'an individual's coping capacities' (O'Keefe, 1998: 52). For girls, 'exposure to community and school violence and experiencing child abuse' were factors increasing the likelihood of their violence perpetration (O'Keefe, 1998: 53). Girls who had experienced child abuse were also more likely to be victimised in their own relationships (O'Keefe, 1998: 53). This could be because girls become so used to witnessing and experiencing violence that abusive behaviour becomes considered as 'normal' (O'Keefe, 1998: 54). Similarly, Garrido and Taussig (2013) found that young people who witnessed domestic violence between their parents were more likely to become victims of violence in their own relationships. However, they did not find the same link between witnessing violence between parents and perpetrating violence (Garrido and Taussig, 2013). Further, they found that young people who had 'warm and involved caregivers and prosocial peers' could be protected from the link between witnessing violence between parents and experiencing violence in their own relationships (Garrido and Taussig, 2013: 363).

The literature above highlights that the main risk-factors for perpetrating violence in relationships are: holding sexist beliefs; the acceptability of violence; witnessing or experiencing violence; and having low self-esteem. However, the literature shows is that it is a combination of these risk-factors that increases this likelihood of young people experiencing violence in their own relationships.

Technology

One way in which the sexual double standard is upheld amongst younger people is through modern technologies. In contemporary society, technology is very important to younger people and younger people use their mobile phones, which often have internet access, constantly (Ringrose et al., 2012). Almost all the girls in the Girlguiding (2013b) survey who were aged eleven and over used social networking sites. Recently, there has been much media sensationalism surrounding young people and their use of 'sexting' (Ringrose et al., 2013: 306). 'Sexting may refer to sexually explicit content communicated via text message, smart phones, or visual and web 2.0 activities such as social networking sites' (Ringrose et al., 2012: 9). It can include activities such as requesting and sending sexual photographs and messages and sexual coercion (Ringrose et al., 2012). Girls are often sexually harassed, objectified and propositioned via online and mobile technologies (Ringrose et al., 2012) and 'online bullying' is common (Girlguiding, 2013b: 9). Girlguiding (2013b: 9) report that 54% of girls 'have had negative experiences online'; 20% have been the victim of sexism online; and 5% have had 'sexual' pictures of themselves shared without permission. In addition, girls who are victimised online usually keep it to themselves and only 22% would tell their parents (Girlguiding, 2013b). Boys are fully aware that they can tarnish a girl's reputation by sharing sexual pictures of girls on social media websites and girls are often worried about this (Ringrose et al., 2012). Boys often use coercive behaviour to get girls to comply with their demands by threatening to share photographs (Ringrose et al., 2012). Sending an explicit photo is a risk for a girl, as the photo cannot be undone once it has been sent, they do not know who could have access to the photo, there could be legal ramifications and the photo can leave girls open to coercion by boys (Ringrose et al., 2013); but being asked for a photograph can also be considered a compliment by the girls, as confirmation of the girls' appeal to boys and amongst boys, managing to get a girl to send a photograph is applauded (Ringrose et al., 2013). Although girls are often harassed for explicit pictures, their reputations are at stake, while boys are praised (Ringrose et al., 2012; Ringrose et al., 2013), which shows that a sexual double standard is still prevalent. Although girls resented the derogatory labels that girls were given after sending sexually explicit photos, the girls also vilified those girls who have sent explicit pictures (Ringrose et al., 2013). Therefore, as Ringrose et al.

(2013) show, there are clear contradictory messages here: for girls, to be asked for a photograph can be considered a compliment and boys will often use many coercive tactics to retrieve photographs; if a girl does send a photograph, this can lead to derogatory labels such as 'slag', but this can happen whether a girl sends a photograph or not, whilst boys will always be praised for managing to obtain the photographs.

The safeguarding teenagers' intimate relationships (STIR) study, which looked at the connections between online and offline abuse across four European countries, found that young people in England were more likely to send and receive sexual messages than in the other countries (Wood et al., 2015) and sexting was considered to be normal in England (Aghtaie, 2018). Greater numbers of English young women also stated that their messages, which sometimes contained explicit photos, had been 'shared' and 61% of those who reported a detrimental effect after a photograph was sent also had a photograph shared (Wood et al., 2015: 154). Requests for sexual photos have become normalised and once a photo has been sent, young people are often afraid of what could happen to that photo (Barter et al., 2015). In all countries surveyed, both young women and young men who had experienced any kind of violence in their relationships 'were at least twice as likely to have sent a sexual image or text' than those who had not been victimised (Barter et al., 2015: 34). Likewise, the likelihood of sending explicit messages increased if the young person was in an abusive relationship (Barter et al., 2015).

New technologies also mean there are now more ways in which abusive partners can abuse and control their partners (Zweig et al., 2013; Aghtaie, 2018). The STIR study also found that 40% of all those surveyed across the European countries experienced abuse online (Barter et al., 2015). In England specifically, 48% of young women experienced online abuse, which was the highest incidence rate out of all four countries, compared to 25% of young men, which was one of the lowest incidence rates out of the four countries. In all countries, young women were more likely than

young men to report that they had perpetrated violence online (Barter et al., 2015). Online violence was almost always experienced in combination with face-to-face violence (Barter et al., 2015). From the interviews, Barter et al. (2015: 50) explain that controlling behaviours experienced online ranged from control over who a partner could and could not communicate with online to, monitoring of behaviour, surveillance and 'being pressured or forced into sharing passwords for online accounts'; behaviours that are considered to be part of the pattern of coercive control when experienced face-to-face. This control was often normalised and considered to be part of a loving relationship (Barter et al., 2015; Aghtaie, 2018). Online surveillance also sometimes resulted in face-to-face violence (Barter et al., 2015). Sexual coercion was also experienced online, in conjunction with offline coercion (Barter et al., 2015 Aghtaie, 2018).

Similarly, Zweig et al., (2013), in their survey of school-age students in the United States, found that those who experience abuse from their partners online are likely to experience abuse from their partner offline. Girls were 'twice as likely as males to experience sexual cyber abuse' (Zweig et al., 2013: 1069) and those who do experience online sexual abuse, 'report rates of sexual coercion that are seven times higher' than those who do not (Zweig et al., 2013: 1070). Stonard et al. (2015) conducted focus groups with young people aged 12-18 years old to investigate the part played by technology in young people's relationships and its relation to violence. Again, they found that technology was used as a mechanism for abuse and control within relationships, often because of fears surrounding infidelity (Stonard et al., 2015). Young women were more likely to be controlling online. However, there were gendered differences into how online abuse was experienced, with young women stating that they were more likely to be emotionally affected, while young men believed that getting away from online abuse was much simpler to get away from (Stonard et al., 2015). Despite this, Stonard et al. (2015) also found that the use of technology did also have an affirmative influence on young people's relationships.

However, new technologies also create more opportunities for resistance against sexism and sexual harassment. On social networking sites such as Twitter, there are numerous accounts dedicated to fighting against sexism both online and offline. Resistance was also evident in Ringrose et al.'s (2013) study, where girls would make up creative excuses to avoid sending explicit pictures to boys online, as it is not possible to just say "no" to a request without any kind of backlash – girls may end up being labelled with a bad reputation whether they do or do not send out pictures – but the fact that girls are unable to say "no" in the first place is perhaps of more importance.

New technologies are important to young people. Despite the internet being used as an arena for resistance for some, the studies above show that online abuse is prolific and often consists of the markers of coercive controlling violence. Online violence is often used in conjunction with face-to-face violence within relationships and some of the younger people in the studies above consider this behaviour to be a 'normal' part of loving relationships. It is therefore imperative that any study looking at violence in the relationships of young adults considers the role of technology within these relationships. This current study investigates this.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that younger adults, especially younger women, are more likely to experience domestic violence than older adults, emotional violence is the most common form of violence experienced by younger people and younger women are much more likely to be the victims of sexual coercion. Ideas around gender and sexuality help to perpetrate the belief that female sexuality is inferior to male sexuality, that male sexuality is privileged and these constraints in female sexuality lead to sexual coercion being normalised. Violence in younger people's relationships is prolific and can be perpetrated both online and offline and more young women than men are adversely affected by these abuses. Young women consider some abusive behaviours

to be a 'normal' part of relationships that helps to prove their partner's love for them, which aids in the survival of abusive relationships. In addition, the main risk factors that increase the likelihood of abuse occurring in relationships have been highlighted as: holding sexist beliefs; the acceptability of violence; witnessing or experiencing violence; and having low self-esteem. Though, the likelihood of abuse occurring is increased when a combination of risk-factors are present.

Stark's typology of coercive control can be used as a starting point to find out how coercive control works in young adults' relationships and whether love, or young adults' perceptions and definitions of love, have a role to play in coercive controlling relationships. The next chapter will go on to illustrate the methodology employed for this current study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Aim

The aim of this research was to determine whether coercive control is apparent in young adults' relationships and whether coercive control and love intertwine in the relationships of young adults. The research questions, detailed aims and objectives were as follows:

Research Questions

- Can we use Stark's typology of coercive control to look at how/why domestic violence is gendered in young adults' relationships?
- What does 'love' mean to young adults?
- If young adults do not have the same responsibilities as older generations, does 'love' help to tie them into abusive relationships?
- Is there a link between control and 'love' in young adults' relationships?

Aims and Objectives

- To find out whether coercive control is apparent in young adults' relationships. Stark (2007: 205) argues that men use coercive control in order to advance their own status above their partner through 'exploitation, structural constraints and isolation', so this study investigates whether these behaviours are apparent in the

relationships of young adults or not in order to find out how and why domestic violence is gendered.

- To explore how young people construct 'love', if at all, and what this means in terms of their relationships. To find out what young adults believe 'love' and to be 'in love' means and what behaviours – negative and positive - they consider going alongside 'love' in their personal relationships.
- To analyse young adults' constructions of 'love' to see whether these constructions tie them into relationships that are abusive; whether there are positive aspects of abusive relationships that prevent young adults from leaving or if there are other reasons why young adults choose to stay within these relationships.
- To examine whether there is a link between young adults' constructions of 'love' and experiencing and/or perpetrating abusive behaviours in intimate relationships; and whether young adults' relationships consist of behaviours that young adults consider to be related to 'love' as well as coercive controlling behaviours.

The research objectives for this study were met using semi-structured interviews, conducted using a feminist approach; as well as secondary analysis of interviews conducted in the COHSAR study.

Semi-structured interviews allow for exploration of the participants' meanings in relation to love and abuse in their relationships, which provided a picture of how love and coercive control/abuse intertwine in the relationships of young adults and whether there are any differences between young women and men. The secondary analysis of COHSAR transcripts allowed for a deeper analysis of the themes found in the primary interviews.

Background

Research into domestic violence undertaken in the United Kingdom tends to be qualitative, looking at the experiences involved (Hester et al, 2010). In the United States, there is a greater emphasis on quantitative research, often relying on the Conflicts Tactics Scales (CTS), which is 'a measure to quantify the amount and type of violence used in personal relationships' (Hester et al, 2010: 255). Although the CTS has been revised, there is still little focus on the impact of violence (Hester et al, 2010). Prevalence has been also been a focus for research into young people's relationships in the United States (Barter et al., 2009). Much of this research originates from the United States and rarely looks at the impact of violence on younger people. Quantitative methods have been most commonly used when investigating violence in younger people's relationships (for example Foshee, 1996; O'Keefe, 1998; Jackson et al., 2000; Halpern et al., 2001; Wolfe et al., 2001; Murnen et al., 2002; Wolfe et al., 2003; Sears et al., 2007; Fox et al., 2013). Barter has argued that we need to go beyond researching prevalence to look at 'context, intent and impact' when researching younger people (Barter, 2009: 219) and has suggested 'a more resource-intensive methodology' may be needed in order to do this (Barter, 2009: 214). Hester et al. (2010: 257) have demonstrated that by using a 'feminist epistemological approach', one can 'construct research instruments' that allow for investigating the whole spectrum of abuse, as well as the 'context and impact' and the perspective of the abuser. For these reasons, this study was qualitative, using semi-structured interviews in order to use participants' perspectives to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives.

What makes feminist researchers distinct is that: feminist researchers state their 'values' throughout the research process, whereas mainstream researchers tend not to do so (Oakley, 2000: 21); 'giving a voice to the silent' (Oakley, 2000: 47); ending the subjugation of women (Westmarland, 2001: 5); 'liberation' (Fonow and Cook, 1991: 6); and promoting 'social change' (Westmarland, 2001: 6). Ramazanolu and Holland (2002: 16) suggest that what makes feminist research 'distinctive' is 'that it is shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics and grounded in women's experience'. Feminist

research should 'aim to produce knowledge that will be useful for effective transformation of gendered injustice and subordination' (Ramazanolu and Holland, 2002: 147). However, we also need to bear in mind that there are differences between women depending on social location and these create differing experiences (Harding, 1987), so feminist research should look at 'how gender intersects with race, class, sexual preference, disability, nationality, and so on' (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 172). It was on this basis that participants were given as much control and freedom during the interviews as possible and participants' words were used as a starting point for further discussion. Gender was at the forefront of the research design and was used as a lens in which to analyse data; gender differences were taken into consideration when looking at themes within transcripts and when answering the research questions. I was overt about my feminist principles throughout the research process. I also decided that I would answer any questions put to me by participants. And, more importantly, the aim of this research was to produce more knowledge to reduce gender inequality and violence in young adults' relationships.

One focus of feminist research since the 1970s has been violence against women (Hanmer, 2000; Maynard and Winn, 1997). Although, in comparison, violence in the relationships of younger people in the United Kingdom has not been given the same amount of consideration (Barter, 2009). Stark (2007) has also argued that there has been a lack of theoretical development in relation to domestic violence and changes in domestic violence policy have not affected coercive control. Stark's work comes from a feminist perspective and Anderson (2009: 1455) has argued, as illustrated in the previous chapter, that we should use Stark's typology of coercive control as a starting point in order to 'reignite feminist theoretical debate about how and why domestic violence is gendered'. For these reasons, this study uses Stark's typology to assess whether coercive control can explain how and/or why domestic violence is gendered in the relationships of young adults. As 'love' was a key theme in previous literature relating to violence in younger people's relationships, the meaning love has to young adults in terms of their personal relationships is also considered. By answering the research questions using a feminist perspective, it is hoped that more light will be shed

on whether there is a relationship between love and abuse in young adults' relationships.

My Values

Throughout this project I was aware of my background and values and how these can affect the research process. As a white, educated, working-class, heterosexual, atheist, feminist, female, I brought my own assumptions and biases into the process, as we all do.

I also had to be aware of any 'cultural, religious, gender or other differences in the participants' (Creswell, 2012: 56). I was respectful of any cultural and religious differences and making sure not to alienate any participants with westernised assumptions that I may bring to the research process, despite the majority of my sample coming from a White British background. Reflexivity and awareness of my own social position, 'values, attitudes and biases' was important (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 188) and I have made sure that these are visible.

My interest in violence against women has informed my research interests and activism and so I do have knowledge of abuse that may be far removed from the lived experiences of those who have been in abusive relationships. This meant that although I may not have necessarily interpreted certain behaviours as abusive myself before speaking to the participants, if the participants interpreted these behaviours as being abuse, these were considered as abuse, within reason.

As a woman who has experience of witnessing abuse in the relationships of many friends, who have all been females in heterosexual relationships, this could have created a gender bias in my work; I could have expected all victims/survivors to be female and all perpetrators to be male. However, I do not feel that this has been the case. All experiences of abuse have been listened to and documented and these have come from both female and male survivors. I kept an open mind throughout the process and ensured that I did not impose my beliefs upon the participants and

listened to all voices irrespective of gender or sexuality. Even though male participants are in the minority in this study, I did actively try to interview as many males as possible and included all male participants aged 18-34 in the COHSAR study in my analysis.

This study was designed to give as much control to the participants as possible. The semi-structured style of the interview gave participants space to express themselves, without being too restricted by a rigid interview schedule. I also answered any questions put to me by the participants.

I do not feel my background has been a hindrance but has in fact aided in the completion of this study. Having experience of talking to friends who have experienced abusive behaviours helped when talking to participants about abuse in their relationships, as I found some of the situations to be remarkably familiar. Nonetheless, I did not use this familiarity to guide the research process; instead I used participants' accounts as a basis for the analysis. I therefore advocate the principle of stating one's principles and biases during the research process, which is common to feminist research (Oakley, 2000).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the primary research instrument used in this study, using original interviews and a further sample from the COHSAR research (Donovan and Hester, 2014). Original interviews were conducted between June 2015 and January 2016, while the COHSAR interviews were carried out about ten years earlier. In what follows, I first outline my approach to the primary interviews and then explain the inclusion of COHSAR interviews.

Berg (2014: 105) has defined an interview as 'a conversation with a purpose' and 'the purpose is to gather information'. In qualitative research, the researcher is interested in obtaining participants' own 'interpretations' of the research subject, not necessarily 'facts' (Warren, 2001: 83). I wanted to look at how the participants interpret different

abusive/coercive controlling behaviours in their relationships, as well as what they believe love to mean and what they consider to be healthy and unhealthy relationships, whilst drawing on their own personal experiences. Semi-structured interviews involve devising some interview questions, usually core questions, that need to be answered by every participant, but there is room to move the questions around or allow participants to elaborate if they bring up interesting topics (Berg, 2014). Semi-structured interviews allow participants to tell 'stories', which is a 'meaning making process' (Seidman, 2006: 7), which enabled participants to use their own words to explain what love means to them in the context of abusive relationships, the meanings of any interactions of love and abuse and its impact on them.

There has been some criticism about interviews being used too often in research (Yeo et al., 2014: 181). However, I do not consider this to be a valid criticism. Interviews allow researchers to find out how individuals 'experience and construct their lives' (Yeo et al., 2014: 182), and this was useful for this study as I was interested in participants' relationship experiences and what they consider these experiences to mean.

Some considerations need to be borne in mind when designing and conducting interviews in research. Rapport is important in interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Creswell, 2012), as participants need to feel they can answer the questions asked or indeed decline to answer. Overall, I feel that I had a good rapport with the participants and did not come across a situation where a participant appeared to be troubled about answering any questions. Rapport was built in the interviews by talking to the participant before the interviews started; by asking participants general questions about themselves and their work. As most of the participants were students at the time of the interviews, most of these conversations centred on aspects of student life, which I was able to empathise with. These conversations sometimes continued after the interviews had finished. I feel that these informal conversations enabled participants to feel more at ease answering questions during the interviews. I also

reminded participants that they could ask me questions at any point or could stop the interview. On one occasion, a participant did seem to get upset, but when reminded that she could decline to answer, she assured me that she wanted to continue. At the end of the interview, once the digital recorder had been turned off, she explained that she had no problem talking about her experiences. Overall, participants were very open and had a lot to say about their relationship experiences. Some of the participants expressed that they found the questions interesting and remained in the interview room to talk informally after the interviews had finished. Related to this, words can mean different things to different people (Warren, 2001) and both the researcher and participant need to know what each other are talking about (Fontana and Frey, 2000).

The pilot focus group (see below) helped to counteract any problems of ambiguous language, as amendments were made to the questions that the pilot participants expressed did not make sense to them. Interviewing can be 'emotionally demanding' (Yeo et al, 2014: 201), which was an even greater concern in this study, as some of the questions were sensitive in nature. There is no real way of knowing what a participant might reveal and the researcher is not able to advise participants, so being prepared for certain disclosures is crucial (Yeo et al, 2014). Although some disclosures were emotional, I consciously made sure that my response to such disclosures was not unsettling to the participants, which included being aware of my body language so that I did not make participants feel uneasy. It is also important to remember that interviews are not 'neutral' (Fontana and Frey, 2000: 663), participants and researchers bring their social backgrounds to the interview process (Warren, 2001). I therefore kept my social background, as a white, working class, educated woman, in mind when analysing and interpreting the data. On a more practical note, the transcription of interviews can take a long time (Silverman, 2010). But I think any negative consequences of this were off-set by the rich data that was obtained by fully transcribing each interview. Transcription, on average, took around six hours per interview to complete. Interview transcription took place immediately after each

interview was completed. This not only removed some of the burden of transcribing all the interviews at the end of the process, but also made sure that each interview was fresh in my mind when transcribing, so I could remember anything relevant in terms of body language or facial expressions to add to the transcriptions as notes.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were given a demographics form, which asked participants for their age, gender, ethnicity, religion and sexuality (see appendix (1) for a copy of the demographics form. As the interviews were semi-structured in style, some questions were developed beforehand which were asked to all participants, such as questions related to love and what the participants considered love to mean to them, whether they believed they have been in love and why, what they considered to be their best and worst relationships and why, ensuring understanding of young adults' constructions of love and how these fit in with their own relationships. These questions built upon Donovan and Hester's (2014) questions in their study comparing heterosexual and same-sex abuse in relationships (COHSAR), but instead targeting young adults specifically. Donovan and Hester (2014: 49) asked questions that 'were based around an exploration of two accounts: a best and worst relationship experience and from beginning to end or current situation', as well as 'general' question surrounding love and abuse in relationships. Cues relating to whether love was a part of these experiences and why the participants believed that to be the case were also included in the current research. If participants did not directly mention abusive behaviours when talking about their experiences, participants were probed to see if they have experienced or perpetrated any negative behaviours in their relationships, asking about specific abusive acts. Questions relating to how the positive and negative experiences and behaviours made participants feel/the affect they had on them and why they believed they happened were asked. If participants mentioned that they had experienced or perpetrated specific violent acts, participants were asked if they had experienced or perpetrated these on other occasions. This was to try and gauge whether these violent acts were part of a pattern of abuse (coercive control) or one-off acts. Participants were also asked about the context in which these abusive

behaviours were experienced and/or perpetrated. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in appendix (2).

Analysis

To analyse the semi-structured interviews, a thematic analysis was used, based on 'cross-sectional indexing', which 'involves a consistent system for indexing the whole of a data set according to a set of common principles and measures' (Mason, 2009: 150). NVivo was used to aid in the thematic analysis of the interviews. Initial categories, or themes, were created as nodes in NVivo based on the research questions. Each interview was transcribed word-for-word, with notes on body language, tone of voice, silences, etc. included in the transcripts where necessary. Once each transcript was completed, they were read and re-read, before importing into NVivo for initial coding. Transcripts were first coded in NVivo using the themes that were developed based on the research questions. I then went through the transcripts looking for other themes that were brought up by participants. New nodes were then created in NVivo and were used when looking through each transcript. This process was repeated until each of the transcripts had been coded according to the themes developed in NVivo, always looking out to see if new themes were occurring in the data. Upon completion of each interview, I also wrote a 'memo' in NVivo for each participant which contained my initial thoughts on the participant and their interview. This was done so that I had a written record of each participant and interview so that I could refer to this throughout the analysis process.

Once each transcript had been coded, I then exported and printed the data contained in each node in NVivo so that I could read through what different participants said in relation to each theme. I then wrote memos in NVivo for each node which detailed

participants' answers in relation to each theme. These themes formed the basis for the construction of the Findings chapters.

Although I looked out for themes, both reoccurring and new, I also looked at the transcript as a whole for each participant. I looked at the order of events, behaviours and emotions within young adults' relationships, as well as the words used to describe these and the tone of voice and body language of the participants when talking. I also looked at what did not fit within the participants' answers by referring to different parts of the transcript when necessary. Although I was looking at what participants said in relation to individual questions, I was also comparing these answers to the answers given by participants in relation to other questions throughout the interview process.

Participants' socio-demographics were taken into consideration during interpretation. Throughout the whole process, I was thinking about and linking back to previous literature when relevant, as well as to the research questions. These interpretations formed the basis of the findings chapters which follow on from this chapter.

Looking at the transcripts as a whole allowed me to see whether abusive acts are part of a pattern of abusive events constituting coercive control, and to see whether Stark's typology holds true in the relationships of young adults. It also allowed me to see how love fits in within young adults' relationships, and if there is a link between love and abuse in the relationships of young adults.

Piloting

Prior to conducting the interviews, in June 2015, piloting of the interview questions took place in the form of a focus group. A focus group is a group interview, or 'a guided, collective conversation' (Berg, 2014: 172) and this was used to test the interview questions, to see whether they were understood by young adults and to make sure that the questions asked what I intended them to ask. The focus group was used to obtain feedback on the flow of questions and the language used, particularly the language used in relation to love and practices of love. A convenience sample of three participants, two males and one female, was used for the focus group and it was conducted in a pre-booked room at the university. Posters, leaflets and emails were circulated advertising the focus group in order to recruit participants. It was originally hoped that the focus group would contain four or five participants, but due to time constraints and because the focus group took place right at the end of the university exam period, when many of the student population begin their summer break, the focus group was limited to three participants. However, this did not seem to impede the focus group in any way. Two participants of the focus group were eighteen years old and the other participant was twenty-four years old, which I felt was useful given my target population age group.

The format of the focus group encouraged the participants to discuss ideas surrounding the language used to inform the wording of questions, allowing me to gain an understanding of how young adults talk about love and the words they use. The focus group format, allowing for discussion was far more valuable to me in terms of checking the wording and meaning of questions to participants than had the piloting been conducted using a one-to-one interview format. Participants were asked example questions from the interview schedule and were asked how they would interpret those questions if they were asked to answer them. Participants were also asked if words such as 'love' and 'abuse' were appropriate to use in an interview context. The consensus amongst the participants was that these words were the most appropriate to use, as there are no other words that can be used to obtain the information that I wanted to retrieve from participants. At the end of the focus group, participants were

asked if they had additional comments, and so participants gave ideas on extra questions that could be asked to gain a deeper understanding of young adults' relationships. The final question in the interview schedule which asked whether participants preferred being in a relationship to not being in a relationship was created as a direct result of discussions within the focus group. Overall, participants seemed enthusiastic about the project. I feel that the comments made in the focus group were valuable to the research process, especially in terms of giving an insight into the language used by young adults. Allowing young adults to have an input into how the interview schedule was finalised was also a way of giving power to young adults in the study, which is consistent with the ideals of feminist research.

Although this was only the pilot stage of the study, it was still imperative that confidentiality was stressed in the focus group (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Participants therefore were asked to keep other participants' answers confidential and this was also stated in the information sheet and consent forms that were presented to each participant. Participants were also told in the information sheet and consent form, as well as verbally in the focus group, that they were not required to answer the questions themselves, but to just discuss the meaning of the questions to them. This helped to limit participants in talking about their own personal experiences and removed the likelihood that participants would reveal sensitive information.

It was also important that the focus group participants were at ease throughout the focus group process (Stewart et al., 2007: 102). It is felt that the relaxed, informal atmosphere of the focus group allowed this. The focus group was digitally recorded, notes were taken and a full transcription was made in order to keep a correct record.

Interview questions were also informally tested by asking colleagues what they thought about the questions both before and after formal piloting.

Original Interview Sample

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, which means that all those in the sample were selected for a 'purpose' (Ritchie et al., 2014: 113). Thirteen interviews were completed with young adults aged between 18 and 25.

Ideally, I wanted equal numbers of female and male participants, but I was always aware that it can be more difficult to obtain male participants than female participants, as other studies where both younger females and males have been interviewed have higher female participation rates (for example, Barter et al., 2009; Barter et al., 2015). However, I did try to get as many male participants as I could and I was successful in interviewing one transgender male and three male participants.

Colleges and universities in the South-West area were contacted to ask whether they would allow me to give out leaflets requesting participation to students and whether they would allow me to distribute advertisement posters in student areas and on noticeboards. The colleges and universities were contacted via their administrators, as soon as I received ethical approval (see below), by email and these emails were chased up with further emails and telephone calls until I was able to make contact with the correct people. The institutions were told that impact would be kept to a minimum and interviews were conducted at times convenient to the colleges and universities, during free periods or outside of college or university hours if necessary. The colleges and universities were asked if there were any times when they did not want research to take place. The universities and one further education college agreed that I could gain access to their students, but I was told that I would have to wait until late September 2015. Additionally, the further education college said that I would not be able to attend their campus in person and so I sent them leaflets and posters to be

distributed on my behalf. I was told that these leaflets and posters would be put in areas that students congregate. Another further education contact was unresponsive, despite numerous calls and emails. Although there was interest from one potential participant, I did not manage to interview any young adults from further education colleges and so all of original sample participants came from university populations.

I attempted to recruit students from the universities by talking to students one-to-one in student break areas and by displaying my posters and leaflets on noticeboards in areas where students congregate. The leaflet was a smaller version of the recruitment poster and this can be found in appendix (3). Teaching staff at the universities helped with recruitment by giving out flyers to their students. The leaflets and posters gave details about the study as well as my contact information for participants to get in touch. Student societies, including faith societies and LGBT+ societies, were also contacted to gain access to a more diverse sample. Some of the societies I contacted were helpful and suggested that I advertise my study details on their social media pages and others forwarded out emails on my behalf. I found that recruitment through the societies' Facebook accounts to be the most fruitful form of recruitment. All in all, however, recruitment was difficult. Recruitment for interviews began as soon as I finished piloting the interview questions in June 2015. As I was working with student populations, this meant that I began recruiting right at the beginning of the universities' summer break, which meant that many of the students had left university until September 2015. I did manage to interview two participants during the summer, but I had to wait until late September when students returned to campus in order to recruit more interviewees. I then had an additional vacation time and exam period to contend with, which meant I also struggled to recruit participants during these times.

After struggling with recruitment for some time, I decided that an incentive in the form of a £5 gift voucher would be given to each interviewee to thank them for their time. Upon adjusting all of the advertising material, I found that I had much more interest from students, but recruitment was still slow and I was still interviewing in late January 2016, when participants had finished their exams. In late January 2016, once I had interviewed thirteen participants, my supervisors and I decided that I had enough data

(apparent saturation) to begin the analysis stage of the research process. It was felt that as I had rich data and I was working on a short, strict timescale, I should begin analysis and working on my Findings chapters, but I would interview more participants should there be any further interest. However, there was no further interest from potential participants. Perhaps the difficulties in the recruitment of young adult participants, particularly young men for interviews, is something that should be addressed with further research. Although I was able to obtain more male participants for my pilot focus group, the group only had three participants in total. Though perhaps some male participants prefer being interviewed in a group environment.

Each participant interviewed was given a brief demographics questionnaire before commencing the interview, so that the differences (and similarities) could be looked at in the analysis. Generalisations can only be made if the sample is random (de Leeuw, 2012), and as this was not a random sample, generalisations can only be made about this specific sample.

The final sample consisted of nine female, three males and one transgender male. Gender was based on self-identification and this was indicated on the demographics form. In regards to the transgender male, although he identified as transgender on the demographics form, he did not talk about being transgender at all in the interview; he did not talk about being transgender in relation to his relationships or relate his experiences to trans* issues more generally. It was therefore decided that his experiences should not be analysed as relating to trans* issues, so not to problematise issues that he himself had not described. Eleven of the participants described their ethnicity as White (seven White British and two from an 'other white background'), one participant was from a mixed ethnicity background and one participant described their ethnicity as Black African. Seven participants identified as heterosexual; five, all of whom were female, identified as bisexual; and one participant identified as lesbian. In terms of religion, six participants were atheist, five participants were Christian, one was Jewish and one participant was agnostic. One participant considered herself to have a disability. None of the participants had children. All but two of the participants

were in a relationship at the time of the interview and the number of relationships the participants had been in ranged from one to seven.

Table 1: Demographics of original interview sample

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Religion	Children	Disability
Alison	22	Female	White	Bisexual	Atheist	No	No
Annie	25	Female	White	Bisexual	Atheist	No	No
Daniel	18	Male	White	Heterosexual	Christian	No	No
Esther	21	Female	Black African	Heterosexual	Christian	No	No
Finola	20	Female	White	Bisexual	Atheist	No	No
Heidi	25	Female	White	Bisexual	Atheist	No	Yes
Kate	21	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	No	No
Megan	19	Female	Mixed	Heterosexual	Atheist	No	No
Michael	24	Male	White	Heterosexual	Christian	No	No
Oscar	18	Male	White	Heterosexual	Christian	No	No
Robert	19	Transgender Male	White	Heterosexual	Jewish	No	No
Ruby	18	Female	White	Lesbian	Christian	No	No
Sarah	25	Female	White	Bisexual	Atheist	No	No

Secondary Analysis of COHSAR Interviews

As my original sample was of modest size, it was decided that some secondary analysis would be necessary. A sample was drawn from Donovan and Hester's (2014) COHSAR study to perform this analysis. This was a mixed methods study, combining a survey exploring abuse in 746 non-heterosexual participants' relationships, with 68 in-depth interviews with heterosexual and non-heterosexual women and men (Donovan and Hester, 2014). For this current study, only the data from the interview part of the study was used. The COHSAR study was chosen due to the similarities with my own study and because I had used the COHSAR interview schedule as a basis for my own interview schedule.

The interview transcripts included in the secondary analysis were obtained from the UK Data Archive (study number 6332: Comparing Love and Domestic Violence in Heterosexual and Same Sex relationships, 2005-2006). A total of 59 interview transcripts from the COHSAR study are available on the UK Data Archive. A table of demographics is also available, which includes information about all interviewees in the study. Using this table, I was able to sample participants by age. In total, I analysed 21 interview transcripts from the COHSAR study.

As COHSAR sampled participants between the ages of 16 and 69 (although those interviewed were aged 19-64), Donovan and Hester used age range groups to sort participants of different age groups, for example, 18-20, 21-24, 25-29, 30-34, etc. Therefore, the individual ages of participants were not available to me. At first, I decided to sample all interview participants in the COHSAR study aged 18-24, as this was almost the same age range of the interviews I interviewed. In total, six participants were aged 18-24. Of these, four were female, two were male, all were white, none reported belonging to any religion, none reported having any form of disability. In terms of sexuality two of the participants were gay men and the four women were lesbians. Like the participants who took part in my own interviews, none of these participants had any children.

Table 2: Demographics of COHSAR participants aged 18-24.

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Religion	Children	Disability
Anthony	Male	White	Gay man	None	No	No
Barbara	Female	White	Lesbian	None	No	No
Hazel	Female	White	Lesbian	None	No	No
Janet	Female	White	Lesbian	None	No	No
Meg	Female	White	Lesbian	None	No	No
Russell	Male	White	Gay man	-	No	No

Next, I decided to sample participants aged 25-29, so that I could compare participants of a slightly older age group. There were eight participants aged 25-29 in the COHSAR sample – five females and three males. Again, most of this sample was white, with one participant reporting being of Irish ethnicity. Four participants did not report belonging to any religion, but two participants reported being Christian, one reported being Catholic and one reported being Timtian. In this sample, four participants were heterosexual, one was bisexual, two were lesbians and one was a gay man. Again, no participants reported being disabled. One female participant had children.

Table 3: Demographics of COHSAR participants aged 25-29

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Religion	Children	Disability
Arlene	Female	White	Bisexual	None	No	No
Gavin	Male	Irish	Heterosexual	Catholic	No	No
Jake	Male	White	Heterosexual	None	No	No
Jeb	Male	White	Gay man	Timtian	No	No
Karen	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	No	No
Lynn	Female	White	Lesbian	None	No	No
Nadia	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	No	No
Valerie	Female	White	Lesbian	None	Yes	No

Finally, I sampled participants aged 30-34. I decided to sample up to the age of 34 because Donovan and Hester (2014) found that being under 35 was a risk factor for experiencing abuse within a same-sex relationship. It also meant that some of the participants in this sample would be at least ten years older than participants in my original sample, but not so much older that there would be no generational parallels whatsoever. This allowed me to look out for any interesting similarities or differences between similar age groups. Seven participants were aged 30-34 and of these, four were female and three were male. All participants were white, and the majority of these participants did not report belonging to any religion, though two participants reported being Christian and another reported being agnostic. When reporting their sexuality, two participants identified as gay men, three participants identified as being lesbian, one participant reported being bisexual and one participant reported being heterosexual. As in the previous two age groups, none of these participants reported any form of disability. Again, one of these participants had children.

Table 4: Demographics of COHSAR participants aged 30-34.

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Religion	Children	Disability
Amy	Female	White	Lesbian	None	Yes	No
Bruce	Male	White	Gay man	None	No	No
Emma	Female	White	Lesbian	Agnostic	No	No
Ethan	Male	White	Heterosexual	Christian	No	No
Gerard	Male	White	Gay man	Christian	No	No
Maxine	Female	White	Bisexual	None	No	No
Sarah	Female	White	Lesbian	None	No	No

Once I had chosen the age groups I wanted to sample, I read the transcripts and imported them into NVivo to be analysed in the same way as I did for the original sample. I used the same themes as I had done previously to form the basis of my analysis, so that I could look for similarities and differences between the groups. However, when new themes emerged, I created nodes in NVivo to reflect these and included them in my analysis.

Although my interview schedule built on the interview questions used in the COHSAR study, there were differences between my own data and that from the COHSAR study; not all the interview questions were the same in both studies. I asked participants how common they believed violence was in the relationships of those around the same age as themselves and whether participants preferred being in a relationship or not being in a relationship. Both questions were not asked in the COHSAR study. Therefore, I was not able to make comparisons between the groups based on these themes.

Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was sought from the University of Bristol and was granted in late May 2015. Ethical approval was also granted from an additional university before I was allowed access to their students. Consent to use COHSAR interviews was given by the participants. The ethical procedure, including use by other researchers, was provided by the University of Sunderland.

For the semi-structured interviews, the first point of contact was the educational institutions and it was up to those institutions to allow access to their students. Then, consent from the young adults was required before proceeding further. Each participant was given an information sheet (see appendix (4)) detailing the main aims and reasons for the study taking place and a consent form (see appendix (5)) to ensure informed consent. The information sheet gave participants information about the study as well as detailing that the study is voluntary, they did not have to answer questions they did not feel comfortable answering and that they could withdraw at any time up until a month from the interview date. It also reminded participants that confidentiality was paramount; that any answers given would be anonymised and pseudonyms would be used in place of names when reporting data. Information sheets were sent via email to potential participants prior to conducting interviews and each participant was given the information sheet again once in the interview room.

Interviews always took place in places where privacy could be ensured by using pre-booked rooms at the universities. The consent form also sought permission to record interviews or to take notes if necessary. Awareness of the effects of the use of a digital recording equipment is always needed (Warren, 2001), as some people may feel put-off by having their answers recorded. Participants in this study were told that if they did not want to be recorded, then the interview would be conducted without a digital recorder and extensive notes would be made instead. All participants in the interview sample gave permission for their interviews to be recorded. When researching

potential victims of abuse, there is always the concern that a participant could be put at risk if a partner of a victim/survivor finds out that they have disclosed abuse (Ellsberg and Heise, 2002). Both the information sheet and consent form made no mention of abusive relationships and abuse was not mentioned in correspondence between myself and participants to minimise the risk of this. Participants were told that confidentiality would only be limited if there was a child protection issue. A protocol was developed to disclose information in case a child protection issue was suspected, though fortunately there was not an instance when this protocol had to be used.

There is a possibility that some participants may become aware through the interview process that behaviours they have experienced in their relationships may be abusive. Therefore, all participants in the original sample were given contact details of domestic violence services in the local area in the form of a leaflet. Certain questions can cause 'powerful emotions' (Ellsberg and Heise, 2002: 1600). Language sensitivity is therefore paramount and the wording of the interview questions reflected this. Participants were given control of the research process and were told that they could stop the interview or choose not to answer certain questions. As mentioned earlier in the section on interviews, one participant did seem to become upset during the interview process and she was reminded that she could stop at any point or she did not have to answer any questions she did not feel comfortable answering, but the participant reassured me that she wanted to continue and I was more reassured at the end of the interview when she explained that she did not have any issues with talking about her experiences.

If participants know the main reasons behind the research, this could bias their answers (Silverman, 2010) and so interview participants were not told that I was exploring abuse within relationships. Instead, the participants in this study were told that I will be researching young adults' relationships and love – their likes, dislikes and concerns. This also meant that I had a sample of participants who were not recruited

specifically because of their experiences of abusive relationships, but most of the interview participants talked about abuse they had suffered despite this.

I was also aware of the potential risks to myself that, although unlikely, could occur. As I had no idea what participants could disclose to me, I had to be aware that some responses to questions could be upsetting or I could have ended up at risk of harm from partners of abuse victims/survivors (Ellsberg and Heise, 2002). It was therefore necessary to make sure that I was prepared for any possible emotional responses from participants and able to keep my cool in situations that were emotionally charged. I made sure I took all the usual safety precautions for interviewing, for example I ensured someone knew where I was when I was conducting an interview. I phoned that person before and after the interview at scheduled times. An agreed protocol was developed to be followed if they did not receive a phone call. However, as all interviews were conducted on university sites, safety was not considered an issue at any point.

The ethics of using incentives when conducting research were also considered. As mentioned above, an incentive in the form of a £5 voucher was introduced in late October 2015 due to the recruitment process being slow and an amendment was made to my ethical approval to accommodate this. Before I implemented the incentive, I thought about whether using an incentive could distort potential participants' judgement of the study. It was felt that by choosing to use vouchers to the total of £5, this would be enough only to cover expenses in terms of travel and time for an hour, so participants would only be taking part because they wanted to but were not out-of-pocket by choosing to do so. Participants were told that they would still receive the voucher if they chose not to answer questions and if they decided to withdraw from the study, to show that the voucher was not being used to retain participation. This meant that the voucher did not contradict the voluntary nature of the study. An additional sentence was added to the information sheet and consent

form to reflect this. All participants who took part in interviews prior to the incentive implementation were also offered the voucher retrospectively.

In secondary analysis, confidentiality and consent can be ethical issues. Often, researchers do not obtain consent from participants for their data to be used for other studies (Bryman, 2012). However, this was not applicable in this study as participants in the COHSAR study did consent to their data being used. Confidentiality can be a problem as transcripts can sometimes give enough personal information to make participants identifiable (Bryman, 2012). This was not the case in this instance, as all personal details were removed, and pseudonyms were used in place of names throughout the COHSAR transcripts before they were uploaded to the UK Data Archive.

The data retrieved from the interviews as well as the COHSAR study transcripts have been kept securely. Hard-copies of interview transcripts, notes, consent forms and recording equipment have been kept in a locked filing cabinet. Any data stored on a computer is password-protected. No one has access to any of the data I retrieved besides myself and my supervisors. All participant codes and transcripts have been kept separately in a locked cabinet. The digital recording equipment used was also encrypted.

Limitations

Like all studies, this study did not come without its limitations. The original sample size was modest, with thirteen individuals taking part in interviews. However, the additional sample from the COHSAR study included 21 participants, which resulted in a combined sample of 35 participants. This is a more than adequate number to base the findings of this thesis on.

Nonetheless, the sample was not representative, meaning that any conclusions can only be applied to this sample. The sample was homogenous; most participants were female and came from a White British background, despite efforts to try to recruit a

more diverse sample. Regardless, the participants gave great breadth and depth in their answers, which allowed for an interesting and fruitful analysis and discoveries regarding gendered differences in the experiences of abuse fit in with the previous literature.

A drawback of using secondary analysis is that it is impossible to be as familiar with the data as one can be when conducting primary research. For example, the secondary researcher may not have as much knowledge about individual participants as the primary researcher. Indeed, I did find that I had to keep going back to re-read the COHSAR transcripts throughout the analysis. I was able to recall individual members of the original sample and remember their mannerisms and body language when answering questions which was not possible with the COHSAR sample. This drawback was slightly offset as the transcripts did contain cues to body language and tone of voice, though there is still the chance that my interpretations could have differed had I witnessed the interviews myself. That being said, due to our own biases, all researchers may interpret answers differently whether we have witnessed an interview or not. What is important is that we are aware of these biases and how they can impact our interpretations.

This study did not actively seek to recruit victims/survivors of relationship abuse, instead participants were invited to talk about concerns about their relationships. Perhaps the study would have seen greater numbers of victims of coercive control had the study been based on a sample who had been specifically recruited for their abusive experiences. Having said that, the current sample shows how prolific the experience of abuse within young adults' relationships is. In addition, there is a chance that those who have had violent relationship experiences, particularly individuals still in abusive relationships, deliberately opted out of the study for fear of repercussions or because they did not feel comfortable talking about these experiences. However, it is hoped that the way the study was advertised helped to alleviate fears of repercussions.

This chapter has detailed how semi-structured interviews and secondary analysis were used to obtain the data for this study, including information on the purposeful samples and the thematic analysis used to analyse the data. It has also outlined the ethical considerations which were acknowledged throughout this study as well as its limitations. The next three chapters will now explore the findings from the interviews with young adults and the secondary analysis of the COHSAR transcripts.

Chapter 4: Findings One: Relationships

The purpose of this chapter is to examine what participants thought about relationships and to find out whether there were any differences based on gender. To do this, this chapter looks at participants' ideas surrounding good/healthy and bad/unhealthy relationships and concludes by looking at whether participants prefer being in a relationship or not being a relationship.

Healthy Relationships

All participants in the original sample were asked about their perceptions of what constitutes good or healthy relationships and bad or unhealthy relationships. These questions were asked to explore if participants held appropriate ideas regarding healthy relationships. As indicated in the methodology chapter, these were based on questions from Donovan and Hester's (2014) COHSAR study, which asked about their best and worst relationship experiences. In the COHSAR sample, participants were not asked what constitutes a healthy or unhealthy relationship, but they were asked what made their best relationships the best and their worst relationships the worst.

The first part of the original interviews concentrated on good relationships, beginning with a question which asked participants what they considered a good or healthy relationship to be. The participants' responses to this question are considered below. As participants were asked what they considered to be a good OR healthy relationship, these terms are used interchangeably. COHSAR participants' answers to what made their best relationship good are also considered in this analysis.

Freedom, independence, respect, equality, trust, humour, happiness and fun were dominating themes within these participants' ideas surrounding what constitutes a good or healthy relationship. Alison talked about good relationships as being those which allow partners to do what they wanted, but being as part of a partnership:

Alison: A good relationship would allow the individuals which are involved, uh, personal freedom and independence and it's more of a, sort of, I suppose, joining together and enjoying life together and supporting each other but not limiting each other in any way, I suppose (original sample).

Similarly, Annie was concerned with freedom and independence alongside reciprocity.

Annie: It's two people that have umm, fairly, like compatible lifestyles, two people that have similar values maybe, umm, that respect each other, umm, like to spend time with each other but also have other things going on, so they've got their own friends and their own interests, so they can do those things when they are away from each other, but then come together and have lots to talk about and umm, to know when to give each other time, but to also know when their partner might need them and to be willing to be a bit more patient or a bit more compassionate during those times, umm, to give them that support, umm, but on the whole people that have fun together and bring more to each other than just if they were two separate people (original sample).

For Annie, it was important that both parties have their own, independent and separate lives outside of the relationship. Despite this need for a separate life, support was also important for Annie. This was also the case for Michael.

Michael: So, equality, which is kind of like respect. I guess where both people, umm, allow each other... control over the relationship, so, you have, umm, I don't know, if someone wants free time or time alone or whatever then you respect that. But equally you are there when it's not convenient for you and you sort of help out. And also, when you argue, that you make up afterwards as well... you have some sort of conflict resolution... And that you understand that sometimes you are going to disagree about stuff and that's just alright (original sample).

There is acknowledgement in Michael's account that sometimes arguments can occur between intimate partners, but these are resolved if the relationship is a good one. This highlights the fact that arguments can happen within relationships, but we must look at the context in which these arguments occur to detect whether abuse is occurring (Stark, 2010). Respect was also important to Michael, in the same way as it was to other participants. Similarly, Bruce felt that the equality prevents disagreement in his relationship.

Bruce: It's very equal...He is very intelligent, we (pause) can converse on similar things, we have different views on things but there's an equality in it in terms of how we negotiate what we want to do, how we decide to spend our time (COHSAR 30-34).

This suggests that Bruce considered a good relationship to be one that is balanced. For Heidi, respect and no imbalances of power and control were markers of a good relationship.

Heidi: Umm, I suppose a relationship where both people respect each other. Umm... and... where, umm, where someone doesn't try to take control I suppose? (original sample)

This answer is interesting when looked at in the context of Heidi's relationship at the time of the interview. As will be detailed in the following chapters, Heidi described this relationship as having 'elements that were abusive'. Later in the interview, Heidi talked about how differentials in power in her relationship had caused conflict. As she mentions these as being part of a healthy relationship, this suggests that she did not consider her own relationship as meeting the requirements of a healthy relationship. Heidi did not explicitly state that she considers her own relationship to be unhealthy; but as is outlined throughout these chapters, Heidi did hint that she did not consider her relationship to be entirely good. Oscar contextualised his answer by stating what he saw as an unhealthy relationship – one where there are imbalances.

Oscar: Something that I've always noticed about unhealthy relationships is... there's always one person giving more and one person taking a lot more than the other person, so I feel like it's when both people are happy in a relationship and both people are giving or receiving, like, that [laughs] positive sort of energy (original sample).

Although some participants argued that a healthy relationship is a balanced relationship, it has been argued that relationships are rarely balanced; one partner is usually responsible for giving more emotionally than the other (Jackson, 1993; Dunscombe and Marsden, 1993). Happiness was also a requisite for a healthy relationship for Oscar, which was echoed by Megan.

Megan: Umm, I think, if you are in a good relationship you have fun, if you're a young person, I think the main thing is to have fun with each other, to respect each other, umm, to like, not hold each other back but show each other new things. And, umm, to have a laugh with each other. (original sample)

Megan considered an unhealthy relationship to be one that places restrictions on freedom. Her emphasis on relationships being about fun when you are younger suggests that Megan considered commitment to be something that she equates with the relationships of older people; Megan perhaps saw this commitment as being synonymous with constraints on autonomy.

Fun was also prominent in Janet and Arlene's description of their best relationships, suggesting that fun was an important component of a good relationship for them.

Janet: Erm, we had a lot of fun and we. (long pause) Yeah, we had a really good time. (COHSAR 18-24).

Arlene: He was actually great fun. We did absolutely a lot of things together... a lot of new experiences erm... so I felt an intimacy with him and I was able to talk to him about things which I hadn't disclosed to other people. (COHSAR 25-29).

For Arlene, this brought her closer to her partner. Communication was also important to Arlene. Honesty and trust were considered by Ruby alongside the more fun elements of being in a relationship.

Ruby: Umm, one where both people are happy. I suppose, honest. Where you trust each other and just have a good time together, I guess (original sample).

For Esther, honesty and trust were the most important elements of being in a relationship.

Esther: Honesty is something that is really important to me and trust. Umm, so relating to romantic and friendships and parental relationships, I like to know where I stand with people. And I like to know that they are always going to be consistent. And I need to trust in that, so that's something that's really important to me (original sample).

She stressed the importance of these to her in terms of all her different relationships, not just in the context of romance. Trust was also important to Kate in terms of a healthy relationship.

Kate: Umm, trusting really, that's all I can think of [laughs] (original sample).

Trust was also mentioned by Nadia and Gerard in the COHSAR sample.

Nadia: I would say the really good thing is the complete understanding and trust and, it's, um. I guess when you really can share everything, absolutely everything. It's a kind of a deep intimacy (COHSAR 25-29).

Gerard: I think trust is very important within a relationship. If you don't trust them, if you can't trust them, what the hell are you doing with them... trust... is a major

foundation stone behind a relationship, regardless of what anyone says (COHSAR 30-34).

Trust brought Nadia closer to her partner. However, Gerard suggested that trust is the single most important factor for a good relationship for him; if you cannot trust a partner then you should not be with them.

Although Finola's answer was very brief, she did mention a few things that she considered crucial for a healthy relationship, just in a more concise way.

Finola: One where you trust each other, you just talk about anything basically. And... don't necessarily have to be around them all the time, but you know that if you need them to be there, they will, basically. (original sample)

Together with trust, Finola considered independence, freedom, support and communication as key for a good relationship, which is consistent with other participants in this study. Finola's ideas are like those of Robert.

Robert: Umm... [laughs] I think a good relationship is when you are able to talk freely to your partner. Umm, when there's trust and confidence on both sides, so you don't try to prevent your partner from doing anything that she or he doesn't want to do. Umm, your partner doesn't try to prevent you from doing anything you don't or do want to do. And, you can talk to your partner about anything that is wrong, on your mind, yeah, I guess. (original sample)

The themes of fun, happiness, freedom, independence, equality and trust are themes that can be related to Giddens' (1992) idea of the 'pure relationship', which he explained as being based on emotional parity and the freedom to commit to the relationship what partners feel is acceptable for them, for however long is suitable for them.

Most of the participants brought up similar themes and there were overlaps between what the participants said, all linking in well with Giddens' (1992) 'pure relationship' theory. However, some participants brought up unique themes. Surprisingly, Sarah was the only participant to mention partners liking or loving each other as a condition for a good relationship!

Sarah: Umm, a mutual, not love, not necessarily love but like, a strong like with a person where nobody experiences any sort of like emotional abuse or physical abuse and everybody's just happy. Not all of the time, but most of time! (original sample)

Sarah was also the only participant to mention the absence of abuse as a prerequisite of a healthy relationship, although others said that there should not be any imbalances of power and control. This may be because participants consider a healthy relationship as one absent of abuse as obvious. Like Michael, Sarah acknowledged that relationships can also have their bad moments, again showing that we need to look at the context in which these challenging moments occur in relationships (Stark, 2010). Daniel also had a unique answer when considering his definition of a good relationship.

Daniel: Umm, I think it would be defined by... Umm, mutual consent, umm, by mutual self-sacrifice to the other one. And some degree of shared values, I think. (original sample)

Daniel is a devout Christian and 'self-sacrifice' is a prominent part of the Christian faith (Enright et al., 2014), and this is perhaps why he was the only participant to mention 'self-sacrifice'. Daniel's assertion that shared values are important suggest that, as his value-system is based on his adherent to Christian values, a partner should have a similar belief system for a relationship to be healthy; a healthy relationship for him is one where both partners subscribe to Christianity.

In the same way, Barbara considered doing anything for each other to be a component of a good relationship.

Barbara: Um [*thinks*] I s'pose we'd do anything for each other as well. Like, she had the same type of, erm, outlook as me. Like she wouldn't mind giving things up, or doing things for me.

Interestingly, Barbara described this relationship as her worst, as well as her best, relationship; she described this relationship as 'going towards', domestic violence and talked about her partner being aggressive. However, Barbara does not consider this aggression to be a negative part of the relationship.

Unhealthy Relationships

After asking questions about good relationships, the original interview schedule moved on to bad relationships. Like before, participants were asked to say what they considered a bad or unhealthy relationship to be. Again, as participants were asked what they considered to be a bad OR unhealthy relationship, both terms are used. Similarly, COHSAR participants answers to why their worst relationship were bad are considered.

Control or abuse was highlighted by most participants in the original sample when describing bad or unhealthy relationships. Heidi gave a description of how control can manifest in a relationship.

Heidi: Trying to control your partner's behaviour is definitely unhealthy and, umm, control can happen in lots of different ways, umm, it doesn't even have to be something that's *said*, it can be sort of implied, I think. If you make your partner feel like there's negative consequences to them acting in a certain way, umm, I think that's control as well. (original sample)

Heidi provided a comprehensive description of coercive control in her explanation of unhealthy relationships. This is interesting when looked at in the context of Heidi's experience of abuse in her own relationship the relationships of those around her. This insider-knowledge enabled Heidi to explain in-depth how control can work in relationships. Participants in this study did not consider abusive or controlling behaviours to be a normal relationship experience, in contrast to participants in previous studies (Wood, 2001; Kearney, 2001; Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2011; Towns and Scott, 2013).

Imbalances in relationship dynamics was another theme that was brought up by participants, like Oscar, when describing bad or unhealthy relationships.

Oscar: Yeah, when two people aren't. When someone's unhappy in the relationship I guess and when someone's not looking after the other person and someone's feeling horrible and the other person can't, like, isn't able to look after the other person, or doesn't want to look after them. I don't know, when someone's taking in a relationship (original sample)

Oscar built on his previous remarks about one-sided relationships being unhealthy, showing he felt that healthy relationships should be balanced. So does this mean that all relationships in which there is an inequality in emotional giving are unhealthy? I would argue that this is not the case, but as Donovan and Hester (2011) have stated, the partner who gives the most emotionally in a relationship is also more susceptible to being abused. Sarah also considered her worst relationship to be bad due to imbalances.

Sarah: It felt that that wasn't very equal. It'd be like, 'well, you know I go all the way to [partner's home] but you won't come to my parents at [much nearer area]' (COHSAR 30-34)

Sarah was making all the sacrifices in her relationship and she saw this as unhealthy. Like Oscar, Alison also talked about unhappiness being a trait of an unhealthy relationship.

Alison: Umm, I think there's many kinds of bad relationships... When any partner's respect is compromised or a danger to the other person, or, umm, when you're just not happy or not in love anymore, when it's... yeah, when it becomes something that you have to do or anything like that. (original sample)

The absence of love was only considered by Alison. Love was not mentioned by most participants when talking about healthy relationships either, although love was used as a prompt throughout the interview schedule. This could mean that love is not considered important when defining a relationship as good or bad. Alison also talked about a lack of respect as being a component of a bad relationship, which Esther mentioned in her answer.

Esther: Obviously where there's emotional or physical abuse, where you are making somebody feel less than what they are. Or making someone feel constantly disrespected. And, or where there's a lot of manipulation involved. (original sample)

As well as talking about the absence of respect, Esther also spoke about abuse as being an obvious defining factor when it comes to bad or unhealthy relationships, showing that Esther had an awareness that abuse is not a 'normal' part of relationships. Sarah had a similar definition of a bad relationship.

Sarah: Uh anything where at least one person feels any sort of anxiety or pressure or upset feelings. (original sample)

Though very succinct, Sarah's answer encapsulates what many of the other participants had said about bad relationships; that an unhealthy relationship is any

relationship in which either party feels distress, again showing that participants in this study do not consider this as a normal part of relationships.

Lying and a lack of trust also came up in a few of the participants' descriptions of bad relationships. Kate described an unhealthy relationship as:

Kate: Mistrustful, malicious, umm, violent. It's more, uh, I'd say it's when one person has the other really under their thumb and they know it. I think that's the difference. You can be under someone's sort of influence, but if they know you are and they are not a very nice person, it can then turn into quite a vicious relationship. (original sample)

In the same way as others, Kate also alluded to controlling and abusive behaviours in her answer. She suggested that it is when individuals in a relationship knowingly carry out these behaviours that it can become problematic. For Amy, trust diminishes with lying within relationships.

Amy: And, so, you kind of feel that you see all that deceit, all those lies, all that betrayal, and it, I don't think that makes for a good relationship... Did I want to be with somebody like that? Somebody who I was questioning? Somebody who really, in effect, could I really trust? (COHSAR 30-34)

A lack of trust was also considered unhealthy by Robert.

Robert: Umm. One when you don't trust the person, for example when you're always afraid that she's gonna or he's gonna... try to cheat or umm or won't be here when you need the person, like when you tell the person oh I need someone with me right now I don't feel great and they're like oh I'm busy right now, it's not very great. And when, I think when your partner tries to put their problems on yourself too much it's unhealthy. (original sample)

For Robert, trust was linked to infidelity or imbalances in a relationship. Bruce also talked about imbalance.

Bruce: Um, and I suppose there's a degree of, being totally frank, because there are things because of his visual impairment he can't do that I end up doing and most of the time that's absolutely fine but sometimes, *just sometimes* it feels like I'm lapsing into a role where I'm a *bit* of a carer and there's a list of jobs for me to do. And I'll just say 'look you know hey, I'm not your personal assistant here but I'll do this for you' ... I *don't* think he takes me for granted but I think that he feels comfortable enough to be able to ask me to support him with things that he finds a little bit difficult. But I think it's important to maintain the difference from being a carer and being a partner yeah. (COHSAR 30-34)

Although Bruce is happy with his relationship, Bruce implied that his relationship is unbalanced as he gives more support than he receives; he recognises that this can be an unhealthy relationship behaviour. This is interesting as he also stated that this relationship is his best as it is an equal relationship. Despite the equality in decision-making, this suggests Bruce feels there is an emotional inequality.

Finola also talked about infidelity and unbalanced relationships.

Finola: Any sort of infidelity, mainly. Umm, or just very one-sidedness with the whole relationship, so one person is always there for the other, but then the other person doesn't really do anything for the other person, I guess. (original sample)

As the interview progressed, Finola explained that she had experienced infidelity from more than one partner. Consequently, she felt this to be an element of a bad relationship. When asked what made his worst relationship bad, Russell also talked about infidelity.

Russell: Well he cheated on me for one so, with numerous people (COHSAR 18-24).

Jackson (1993) has argued that love is considered the basis for a sexual relationship and Donovan and Hester (2011:83) highlight that western conceptualisations of love are based on ideas surrounding 'monogamy' and 'fidelity', so infidelity as an unhealthy relationship behaviour should be considered in this context. Infidelity has also been considered a legitimate reason for relationship abuse (Bowen et al., 2013; Stonard et

al., 2015; McCarry and Lombard, 2016). This suggests that infidelity is seen as a central characteristic of a bad relationship.

Annie also talked about the negative consequences of unbalanced relationships, but in a different way.

Annie: Umm, so yeah, so two people that have different values or different kind of wants from a relationship. I think that's quite unhealthy. Umm, and I think those kind of imbalances can lead to, umm, more kind of hard-core things, like umm, abuse or arguments or blaming someone else or making, it kind of makes them feel bad about themselves, umm, yeah. Bad relationships are ones where people aren't kind of enjoying themselves together and don't have a good time and... your friends ask why you are still with someone. (Original sample)

Annie suggested that some differences cannot be overcome in the context of a relationship and it is unhealthy to carry on if this is the case. She implied that these differences can precede abuse. Annie's point about friends questioning the relationship is interesting, as this suggests that perhaps she has had experience of this. Annie had been in an abusive relationship in which her partner attempted to isolate her from her friends and family, so Annie's answer should be considered in this context.

Ruby talked about bad and unhealthy relationships in terms of arguments.

Ruby: Umm, probably one where you don't stop fighting or it's, at least pretty obvious that one person isn't in it, they're not really committed to you at all. (Original sample)

As well as arguments, she also said that a lack of commitment is an element of a bad relationship, in the same way as Michael described.

Michael: I've seen relationships which are just like two people who have been continually trying to break up over and over again but not managed. And then they do break up and then they get back together and then they break up and it just seems to cause so much emotional fall-out in all directions and you can't get the two people, it shatters friendship groups, it makes both people miserable and when they're miserable they go back to their old partner for support, which just means. It just seems like such a vicious cycle of emotional disturbance... I've been there, but I mean, yeah. (Original sample)

Again, the cycle of breaking up and reuniting suggests a lack of compatibility in these relationships. As Michael used this example to define what he considers a bad relationship, this suggests that being devoted to a relationship is important to him. Again, as love is considered to be everlasting (Jackson, 1993; Fraser, 1999; 2005; Donovan and Hester, 2011), this idea surrounding commitment as being the basis for a healthy relationship is not unusual.

The one-sidedness as an aspect of bad relationships is again referred to by Daniel.

Daniel: When it's characterised more by selfishness than it is by selflessness, I guess... If it's hurting or either member of the relationship, uh, if one of them feels... like they have to do something that they would definitely not want to do, umm, that's, then that's definitely bad. Umm... yeah, I think that if it doesn't give room for each of them to grow as people, by themselves, umm, obviously you have to make sacrifices, but... you've got to want them to not have to be forced to make them, I think. (Original sample)

The way in which Daniel described how bad relationships can be characterised by making a partner do something that they do not want to do fits in with what other participants have said about abuse and control being unhealthy. Daniel also mentioned restriction of freedom which was an issue picked up by Megan.

Megan: Uh, I think if you are dependent on each other. Umm, I think if you start cutting off other parts of your life like seeing your friends a lot or pursuing your interests or if like you're in a relationship where you start to, it starts to shape your future in terms of like you don't want to suddenly do your year abroad because you want to be with them at home or you don't want to take that opportunity and go to somewhere all summer and do something really fun on your own because you're scared of the implications it might have at home. I think as soon as like a relationship stops you from doing what you want to do, it's not that good for you. (Original sample)

Megan alluded to issues of becoming isolated within relationships and putting relationships before individual wants and needs. She also considers dependence on a partner to be a negative thing, which is interesting when we consider participants' descriptions of abuse later, where dependency is explained as being mistaken for love. Restrictions on freedom and isolation are described by Stark (2007) as being elements of a coercive controlling relationship.

Being in a Relationship Vs Not Being in a Relationship

The final question in the original interview schedule was 'do you prefer being in a relationship or not being in a relationship?'. This was not asked in the COHSAR study, so what follows is an analysis of the original sample only. This question was asked to gauge how far participants engaged in romantic relationships just for the sake of being in a relationship. Some previous studies looking at abusive relationships and how love is situated within these relationships have found that many of the women consider having a boyfriend to be extremely important (Wood, 2001; Chung, 2007). Therefore, it was decided that this question could be used to explore whether the idea of having a partner was considered important enough to help sustain abusive relationships.

Most of the participants in the original sample were in relationships at the time of the interview and so it is unsurprising that many of the participants said that they preferred being in relationships. However, some of the participants implied that they would prefer being in a relationship for the sake of being in a relationship.

Michael: Umm, because I haven't not been in a relationship for the last eight years... Having someone you can go to and do things with. It's the companionship. I remember when I broke up with [ex-girlfriend], what I missed most was not romantic intimacy or whatever, it like was just having someone who when you say do you want to go on a bike ride on Saturday, they ninety per cent of the time say yes... So I think I really like being in a relationship because it means you have someone to go and do things with... and have loads of shared interests and so I think that actually the friendship is one of the most important things about a relationship to me and I don't think I would be very good at being single. [laughs].

Finola: I just like having the sort of stability of it. I mean I haven't been single a whole lot in the last five years, been in long-term relationships pretty much the whole way through. So, I just much prefer it, having someone sort of there if I need them.

Kate: I think I prefer being in a relationship especially looking at other people who aren't in a relationship. I'm very grateful then of being in a relationship [laughs].

Robert: Yeah, I think I prefer being in a relationship, well, because most of my relationships have been quite positive, apart from the one I was describing earlier. Umm, I think it's nice, I think it gives people something... to have someone by your side to whom you can tell things and yeah, spend time with that person, I think it makes you feel better than when you're not in a relationship.

The participants above suggested that they would prefer being in a relationship, for the sake of being in a relationship. This is consistent with the findings of Wood (2001) and Chung (2007). An equal number of males to females expressed the view that it was preferable to be in a relationship.

Two original sample participants were single at the time of the interview. These participants preferred not being in a relationship.

Esther: Umm, I like being by myself. Mainly because it means you can be selfish and you don't have to worry about your actions affecting the other person. Umm, so at the moment I enjoy being by myself.

Sarah: Umm, I personally prefer not being in a relationship.

Donna: And for what reason?

Sarah: Because I think when you're in a relationship there's more pressure and it panics me and then I ruin it.

Donna: Why does it panic you?

Sarah: I think that everybody cheats. So because I've been cheated on I always think that someone will cheat on me even if they are really, really nice. And then so when I'm in a relationship with somebody I feel more vulnerable because I feel like more bad things can happen, whereas if you're just seeing somebody and dating, then you're less likely to get heartbroken

Whereas Esther preferred to remain single because it means she does not have to put anyone's needs before her own, Sarah had previous negative relationship experiences. Thus, negative experiences can have a bearing on future relationships.

However, some participants said that although they were happy in their relationships, they would also be happy if they were single.

Daniel: ... Umm... it's almost certainly being in a relationship, but personally I believe that... that the end goal of any relationship should be marriage, personally. So, I wouldn't want to be in a relationship for the sake of it.

Alison: I'd say I prefer being in a relationship. Now, yeah, but when I was single, after the first relationship, I was very happy too.

Annie: Umm, I prefer being in a good relationship to not being in a relationship. But, I mean, if it was a bad relationship, I'd much rather be single and looking after myself and spending time doing things that I want to do than the other way around.

Heidi: Umm, I think I pretty much always just ended up in one, but not deliberately, umm, to be honest I'm the kind of person that likes their own space, so I'm not afraid of not being in a relationship. Umm, yeah, it, I don't think it would bother me very much if I wasn't. I still think that you can have a fulfilling life without one.

Megan: Umm, aww, that's really hard because if you were to take yourself out of your situation and look at it objectively, and imagine that you don't know this person, but you see your life with them and your life alone, yes, I think you do, well I have a lot more fun, and a lot more great times with this person, but what happens when I want to go and live in a different country for two years or what happens when he does his Master's here and I do my Master's there... It's so great and such an interesting life experience and a way to find out about yourself if you are in a relationship when you're young and to have all those crazy trials and tribulations and like the rollercoaster of being in a youthful relationship, which is always dramatic and always like passionate and exciting. Or are totally free and you can just go out in the world as a single person and do whatever you want. It's hard because there are great benefits to both of them and yeah. It's all about the person, it's the person is not worth it then you know that.

The extracts above show that having a partner at all costs was not an idea that most of the participants in the original sample subscribed to. The idea of being in a relationship was not enough to sustain an abusive relationship which, is inconsistent with the findings of Wood (2001) and Chung (2007). Participants in this sample who had been in

abusive relationships were less likely to state that they would want to be in a relationship at any cost, despite many of these participants being in relationships at the time of the interview. This is perhaps because they have had these abusive experiences, which helped them to recognise that it is preferable to be happy, safe and single than to be in a bad relationship.

Conclusion

Participants in this study considered good/healthy relationships to be characterised by freedom and independence; honesty and trust; similarities in values; support; equality and no imbalances of power and control; respect; happiness; fun; being mutual; communication; mutual self-sacrifice; and a relationship free from any form of abuse. Conversely, they considered bad/unhealthy relationships to be those which entailed control or abuse; imbalances; unhappiness; lack of trust or lying; being too dependent; not being committed; infidelity; arguments; anxiety or pressure; and selfishness. There was largely a consensus on what relationship behaviours are unhealthy and healthy between both samples, between genders and between age groups. What was most interesting about participants' constructions of good and bad relationships was what they failed to talk about: love. Most of the participants did not say that being in love was an element of being in a good relationship. However, many of the terms used by participants when describing what love meant to them were repeated in their descriptions of healthy or good relationships. Therefore, participants may not have mentioned love as being an important component of a good relationship either because they felt that this was something that goes without saying, or it could be that participants do not feel that one must be in love for a relationship to be considered a good relationship. As we will see later when exploring love within abusive relationships, love does not necessarily equal a healthy relationship.

Most of the participants in the original sample did not consider being in a relationship as being the only precursor for happiness. They were not willing to put up with a bad relationship just because they idealised the idea of having a partner; the idea of being in a romantic relationship was not enough to sustain an abusive relationship.

Chapter 5: Findings Two: Young Adults' Attitudes towards Abuse in Relationships

This chapter addresses participants' attitudes towards abuse in relationships. In the original sample, this was done by looking at two questions which were asked in these interviews: 'how would you define an abusive relationship?', which was re-worded in some interviews as 'what do you consider an abusive relationship to be?' and 'do you think abuse is common in the relationships of people around the same age as you?'. All thirteen interviewees were asked these questions. In the COHSAR sample, participants were asked to define abusive relationships, but were not asked about how common they considered abuse to be. Additionally, COHSAR participants were asked if they thought women and men experience domestic violence in the same ways. What follows is based on the answers given by participants in response to these questions.

In the original sample, two of the participants' answers to the question 'do you think you have ever been in an abusive relationship?' are also considered in this chapter. Responses by these two participants to this question are interesting because although they were able to define abusive behaviours and could identify the markers of an abusive relationship, they did not recognise their relationships as abusive.

This purpose of this chapter is to set out what participants consider an abusive relationship to be, to explore if young adults recognise abusive acts within relationships. This is so a full analysis is developed to determine whether coercive control is apparent in the relationships of young adults and whether coercive control and love intertwine within these relationships.

When participants in both samples were asked to define abusive relationships, a range of different forms of abuse were mentioned. When answering the above questions, participants in the original sample spoke of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse, but other themes that emerged were: gender; insider-knowledge of abusive relationships; and abuse being uncommon within the relationships of young

adults. These themes were therefore used as a basis for the analysis of attitudes towards abuse in relationships. Each of these themes will now be looked at in turn. Running throughout these themes is the debate as to whether abuse is and should be equated with individual specific acts or whether it should be looked at as an ongoing pattern of abuse, i.e. coercive control.

Physical Violence

In the original sample, physical violence was brought up by ten participants in their definitions of abusive relationships. Some of these participants, when asked how they would define an abusive relationship, stated that physical violence is an 'obvious' form of abuse.

Oscar: I feel like there are sort of the obvious types where obviously physically abusing someone (original sample).

Megan: Obviously physical violence is abuse (original sample).

Annie: Obviously physically abusing them (original sample).

Within the COHSAR sample, three of the participants aged 18-24 also described physical abuse as being an 'obvious' form of domestic violence.

Hazel: Obviously then across the scale to the physical, the sexual abuse (COHSAR 18-24).

Russell: Um, obviously violence, I suppose, um, being hit by your partner (COHSAR 18-24).

Anthony: Um, obviously physical (COHSAR 18-24).

Physical abuse was pre-fixed with the word 'obvious' or 'obviously'. This could be due to domestic violence being considered synonymous with physical violence (Stark, 2007); other forms of abuse being included in official definitions of abuse is a recent phenomenon. Physical aggression is also seen as deviant; physically aggressive behaviour is not seen as normal, acceptable behaviour in every day interaction in any context and so it is not seen as normal, acceptable behaviour within relationships. Participants in both samples did not go into much description when talking about physical violence, suggesting that these young adults see physical forms of abuse as self-explanatory; as not in need of as much explanation as other forms of abuse. Stark (2010: 202) argues that the equation of domestic violence with physically violent 'acts' ignores the 'context' in which the violence is situated. By looking only at individual, physically violent incidents, theoretical development surrounding domestic violence has been stunted (Stark, 2007). Stark (2010: 207) argues that we should not concentrate on specific incidents of violence; but we should look to see whether physical violence occurs alongside other forms of violence and whether this abuse is 'ongoing', or part of a pattern.

Although participants aged 25-29 and 30-34 in the COHSAR sample did not talk about physical abuse in terms such as 'obvious', physical abuse was present within most of their definitions.

Gavin: To me it would mean like striking somebody (COHSAR 25-29).

Emma: I, I think it's difficult because if you talk about domestic abuse people always immediately think about physical abuse (COHSAR 30-34).

Participants alluded to this form of violence as being prominent in public consciousness. That most of the participants mentioned physical violence in their definitions of abuse shows that it still reigns high in the public perception of domestic violence. However, as we will see in the next section, emotional violence was a more prominent theme in these definitions.

Emotional Violence

Emotional abuse was mentioned by all participants in the original sample when defining abusive relationships. Emotional abuse was alluded to in the form of control, manipulation, distress, making a partner feel bad, taking away self-esteem, belittling, bullying, making a partner feel worthless and fear. When asked if participants believed that abuse is common in the relationships of people around the same age as them, emotional violence and controlling behaviour were also seen as the most common forms of violence, which reflects previous research findings (Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al, 2011; Bonomi et al., 2012; Fox et al., 2013; Barter et al., 2015). When these participants spoke of emotional violence, they went into much more detail when explaining how it manifests itself in relationships and talked more about how this abuse affects the victim.

Oscar: I think like emotional abuse is sometimes more... it's a terrible thing as well because it damages someone... I imagine that with being with someone beating someone they'd also be emotionally damaged massively by that, and emotionally traumatised by that and I think it's umm, I mean, it's horrible the fact that people can hit someone that they love, but the fact that that person has to remember that for like the rest of their lives is absolutely terrible (original sample).

Megan: Umm, I think... it can range so much from being emotionally manipulative and controlling, which I think is abuse if you're feeling controlled and you feel like you can't live your life in whatever way that you want to, but you're suddenly this person's, just the sole thing in your life... So for whatever reason they may have emotionally manipulated you and you subconsciously stop seeing your mates and going out or whatever and you're not really realising that your life is changing because of it, and then suddenly you notice that they're all you have, that, I think that's abusive (original sample).

Annie: Umm, ones where one of the partners, or maybe both of the partners are, umm, constantly doing things to make the other person feel bad. Making them feel bad about themselves. Taking away their self-esteem, so doing kind of like emotional and mental sort of things to them (original sample).

Participants may have provided more detail because some emotionally abusive behaviours may not be considered abusive unless they are looked at in context. For example, Stark (2007) argued that sometimes abusers exert control over roles that are traditionally seen as feminine, such as household tasks. Without knowing the context of these behaviours, it can be difficult to ascertain whether it is abuse or whether women are conforming to gendered stereotypes. Consequently, when participants explain emotionally abusive behaviours, they provide more context to illustrate *how* and *why* these behaviours are abusive. The participants also spoke of emotional abuse as being ongoing, rather than incident-specific, which is reflective of Stark's (2007) typology.

In the COHSAR study, almost all participants sampled talked about emotional abuse within their definitions of domestic violence, adding weight to the argument that emotional abuse is seen as the most prevalent form of abuse (Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al, 2011; Bonomi et al., 2012; Fox et al., 2013; Barter et al., 2015). The forms of emotional abuse described by the participants included mind games, control, undermining confidence, manipulation, insults, monitoring of behaviour, taking away

power and being made to feel afraid of a partner, which are similar themes to those found amongst the original sample.

Despite the consensus of emotional violence being the most prevalent form of abuse, some participants downplayed the severity of non-physical violence with their use of language. For example, phrases such as 'not so bad' or 'something quite minor' were used by some of the participants in the original sample when asked if they thought abuse was common.

Alison: I think it is, that's the strange thing. I think a lot of my friends have just, you know, not so bad, but have been put down by their partners or, even forced to do things sexually which they didn't want to do (original sample).

Annie: Pretty much all of my friends have experienced, mostly women friends have experienced some form of abuse. It may be something quite minor, but I don't really know many people who haven't experienced abuse within relationships(original sample).

Participants' use of these qualifiers suggests that although emotional abuse is considered the most common form of abuse, physical abuse is seen as more damaging.

In the COHSAR sample, participants in the 18-24 and 25-29-year-old age ranges were more likely to talk about emotional abuse as being less severe than physical violence.

Hazel talked about abuse encompassing a myriad of behaviours.

Hazel: it depends how specific you want to be you know, it could - something as trivial as somebody deciding where you go, one partner deciding where you go, what you do, this, that and the other...I think a lot of the problem is people only portray or only perceive domestic abuse to be the physical act of punching somebody. Whereas you know like emotional abuse quite often has, you know, bruises heal but the scars of somebody telling you repeatedly, repeatedly 'you're this, you're that, you're not worth it', take a long, long time to heal if ever they heal um, you know (COHSAR 18-24).

Hazel referred to some forms of controlling behaviours as 'trivial' suggesting that she did not consider these behaviours to be as serious as physical abuse. However, her answer is contradictory as she also considers the impact of emotional abuse to be just as bad as that of physical abuse. Similarly, Lyn does not equate emotional abuse with 'real' violence.

Lynn: I think my sister is currently in a domestic abuse situation. It's not proper violence but I think she is being abused, she's being manipulated. (COHSAR 25-29)

Although she also contradicted herself later.

Lynn: And I think the violence thing is obviously appalling and shouldn't happen but the emotional sort of abuse that goes on is very serious as well (COHSAR 25-29).

Emotional abuse was not seen as serious as physical abuse by participants in this study. This is contrary to the finding that victims of abuse state that it is emotional abuse that is most likely to affect them negatively (Hester et al., 2007; Stark, 2007; Barter et al., 2009; Williamson, 2010).

Some participants highlighted how difficult it can be to recognise emotional abuse within relationships. Robert, in the original sample, talked about how emotional abuse can sometimes be unintentional.

Robert: I think emotional abuse can occur pretty rapidly without necessarily having the intention of abusing someone like. I think like if you're having a fight and you say like you're such, you're like not worthy of doing something with your life. I think it can occur like pretty rapidly. You can say things that you don't necessarily think but it's still abuse because you make your partner feel like crap and yeah that's abuse I think (original sample).

Robert's assertion suggests that, for him, it is not the intent behind actions that make them abusive, but the impact these actions have. This means that abuse can be difficult to recognise by individuals within an abusive relationship. Robert also talked

about the difficulty in knowing what is happening in others' relationships, as abuse can be disguised. This is problematised by Stark (2007), who argued that violence within relationships is often hidden because abusers tailor their coercive behaviour for specific victims, which can remain invisible unless patterns in behaviour and context are uncovered.

Some of the COHSAR participants in the 18-25 and 30-34-year-old age groups also talked about the intention behind abuse.

Gavin: I don't know I'm not saying its excusable or anything if it's a one off but - abuse to me means its systematic, you know it means it's got an intention behind it.
(COHSAR 25-29).

Gavin's comment fits in with the pattern of abuse which cumulates as coercive control thesis made by Stark (2010). That, although one-off abusive acts are not healthy relationship behaviours, they are not used to control a partner in the same way behaviours which are part of an ongoing assault.

Conversely, Janet talked about the importance being on the impact of the behaviours:

Janet: I think everyone is difficult and manipulative in their own way sometimes ... in my experience, I wouldn't label anything that I've experienced as abuse, but I'm sure different people have different ways of labelling it ... I suppose it's all to do with how much it's upset you and affected you, not necessarily to do with what the person did.
(COHSAR 18-24)

Janet's remarks echoed those of Robert in the original sample, suggesting that abuse may occur even if the perpetrator did not mean to cause harm. However, this is problematised by Stark (2010). Stark (2010) talks about perpetrators of coercive control being active in their quests to subdue their partners into compliance, which means there is no way that coercive control cannot be considered as unintentional.

Megan, in the original sample, talked about how it can be difficult to establish abuse within relationships because of differences between people's personality traits:

Megan: It's really hard to distinguish between an abusive relationship and just complexities of being young and different people's personalities... I think I've seen my friends in abusive relationships and I've always told them that I think that that's abusive, but it seems to be not that serious, I don't know. It's totally different for every single situation (original sample).

Megan suggested that sometimes people have certain personality traits which make them act in a certain way. Sometimes it can be hard to recognise from outside of a relationship whether someone is being deliberately dominating and whether passivity is a result of being victimised, or whether passivity is a personality trait. Earlier in the interview, Megan talked about being overwhelmed at the beginning of her relationship and how she would 'get really weird if he didn't reply to my texts or get a bit, like, just be really attention seeking'. Thus, when Megan talked about the 'complexities of being young', this implied she means how sometimes partners may act in certain ways when they are feeling insecure and how difficult it can be to distinguish when these behaviours are abusive. Megan highlighted the importance of looking at the context of behaviours (Stark, 2007) to identify coercive control.

Again, in the original sample, Heidi also talked about how abuse within relationships can go undetected.

Heidi: I think that the more subtle forms of coercion are probably fairly common, umm, because I don't think people tend to think of them as actually being abuse. Umm, but they are really, if someone is trying to get you to behave in a certain way, then that is abuse, umm, yeah, I think they are probably more common than people realise... Like one of my friends, umm, had a partner who she has broken up with now, thankfully, who would never do anything she wanted to do. So if they were going to go to the cinema, they had to go and see what he wanted to watch or he would say well I'm not interested then. When they went out to dinner, it had to be where he wanted to eat, umm, and he wouldn't make any compromises at all. So, in that sense he's trying to control her behaviour and... there seems to be a bit of a power imbalance there as he's the one who always makes the decisions, so, I think that sort of thing is probably more common than physical violence (original sample).

Heidi began by talking about coercion as a form of abuse but went on to give an example of a friend who had a partner who held all the power within a relationship in terms of decision-making. A partner not willing to compromise is not necessarily indicative of an abusive relationship; this could be a normal part of a relationship. Without knowing anything else about the relationship or whether this refusal to compromise is part of a pattern of coercive behaviours, we are unable to determine whether coercive control is apparent within this specific relationship.

Ruby, also in the original sample, again showed that abusive relationships can be hidden, but because she feels that people would not want to admit that were being emotionally victimised.

Ruby: I don't think people would admit it as much as, talk about it as much as, it is probably more common than we realise, but in my experience... I would say that first relationship was the worst relationship that I personally have encountered. Whereas other examples would be more of the demanding to know sort of where people are, that sort of controlling element (original sample).

Ruby's response stems from how she views her experiences of abuse within her own relationship, which is considered later in this chapter.

Participants in the 30-34-year-old age range in the COHSAR study did not diminish the severity of emotional abuse or talk about the differences between intent and impact. However, one participant in this group, Emma, did talk about how it can be difficult to recognise emotional abuse when it is happening:

Emma: I think it's difficult because if you talk about domestic abuse people always immediately think about physical abuse erm and I was very conscious, erm, because – because, erm, my father was quite, er, violent, I was very conscious of [hits table for emphasis] *not* getting into a physically abusive relationship...And I think inadvertently then I didn't notice that I was actually kind of being emotionally abused (COHSAR 30-34).

Emma's vigilance in preventing herself from being physically victimised resulted in her not recognising the emotionally abusive behaviours that she was experiencing; emotional abuse remained hidden, possibly because these behaviours were considered normal in comparison to physical violence.

Both Wood (2001) and Kearney (2001) found that the women in their studies saw some forms of violence as a normal part of relationships. In their studies with teenagers, Barter et al. (2009; 2015) and Wood et al. (2011), found that young people did not consider the violent behaviours they experienced as abusive and many considered them to be a normal, if unwanted, aspect of relationships. In addition, Stark (2007) argued that some abusive behaviours associated with coercive control may be constructed as patterns of gendered behaviour, so individuals may not recognise these behaviours as being abusive. This not only means that abuse goes unrecognised by victims, but it also remains hidden from friends or relatives outside of the relationship.

Sexual Violence and Pressure

Sexual abuse was fairly absent from participants' definitions of abusive relationships, which McCarry also found amongst her participants – only one young male participant out of seventy-seven participants in total mentioned sexual violence when talking about violence and abuse (McCarry and Lombard, 2016).

In the original sample, three participants mentioned sexual abuse in their definitions of abuse. Annie mentioned sexual abuse as a form of abuse overtly in her definition.

Annie:...Or sexually abusing them or doing things like controlling them (original sample).

Sexual pressure was focused on by Alison when she was asked if believed abuse is common in the relationships of people around the same age as her.

Alison: Not forced [quick to correct], but you know, pressured and it doesn't sound like that big of a deal, but in the moment you feel like you have to do it and that's wrong. And it's kind of frightening that, that's a norm in relationships? (original sample).

Both Annie and Alison had experienced sexually abusive behaviours in their own relationships. Perhaps this was why they were amongst the only participants to consider this form of abuse as relevant. Alison was quick to correct her use of the word 'forced' to 'pressured'. This is important as it showed that Alison was aware that force means rape and she was apprehensive about labelling these experiences as rape. However, Alison recognised that being pressured into sexual activity is a form of abuse. Her answer shows how she views her own experiences of sexual pressure in her abusive relationship. It also shows the blurred line between pressure and force. If one feels that you *have* to do it, then that could be considered force, at least from the perspective of the one being pressured; pressure is experienced as force. Alison showed awareness that sexual pressure is normal in relationships, but it is something she considers to be 'frightening'. This suggests that although there are norms that govern female and male sexuality, in that women are supposed to forsake their own needs for their male partner's needs (Holland et al., 1998), some young women do recognise that these 'rules' are wrong and that they should be challenged. Robert, on the other hand, conflated sexual abuse with physical abuse.

Robert: Well I think there's two forms of abuse, physical and emotional. Physical abuse it's umm, it can be sexual or not, like if you force someone to do something sexually that they don't want, umm, so without their consent. Or if you use physical force on them, like hit her, hit them, pushed them... physical force (original sample).

Robert's conflation of sexual abuse with physical abuse hides the sexual element intrinsic to sexually abusive acts, whilst also masking its gendered dimension.

Mackinnon (1989) argued that rape is **both** sexual and violent and definitions which conceal its sexual nature reinforce the argument that sexual abuse must always be characterised by physical force, which is not the case. She also argues that arguments such as these are used to separate sex from sexual abuse (Mackinnon, 1989). When we look at experiences of sexual pressure and coercion, such as those expressed by Alison, we can see that the two are not always distinct. As outlined in the literature review chapter, Mackinnon (1989) states, just because physical force does not occur, it does not always mean that sex is fully consensual or that certain behaviours are not sexually abusive.

In the COHSAR sample, only **five** participants mentioned sexual abuse within their definitions of domestic violence. However, one female participant – Meg – talked about how she had experienced sexual violence, but how she did not define this as domestic violence.

Interviewer: So when I asked you, have you ever experienced domestic violence or abuse, you said 'no.' So is that because you didn't see that incident as being part of your definition of what domestic abuse is?

Meg: Yeah, because I know that sexual violence is part of domestic violence, but it wasn't in a domestic violence situation. I wasn't living with him and it wasn't connected with any domestic violence at all, it was separate.

Interviewer: Well thank you for saying that, cos that is an issue we need think about. It is that thing of how people define things, isn't it? Cos we thought if we asked that general question, 'Have you ever experienced domestic abuse?' that that would be an umbrella way of picking that up, but...

Meg: ...It would mean that the sexual violence would have had to take place in a relationship where they would - cos most people define domestic violence as something that happens with two people that are living with each other, and sexual violence doesn't always happen in that situation.... I think times when people are pestered into having sex, or made to have sex, and not always in a violent way, but it's

still sexual violence, isn't counted in domestic violence cos the other situations aren't around it. Cause, I think sexual violence is more common than domestic violence. I think sexual violence is in domestic violence situations a lot, but I think it also happens outside of it (COHSAR 18-24).

Meg argued that sexual violence and pressure are only domestic violence if one is living with their abuser AND if they are experiencing other forms of victimisation alongside the sexual violence.

Worryingly, the lack of sexually abusive acts being brought up by participants within their definitions of abusive relationships could signify a widespread belief that sexually abusive behaviours, such as sexual pressure, are not considered to be a form of abuse. Sexual coercion was normal for the young people in previous studies (Burman and Cartmel, 2005; Chung, 2005; Hird and Jackson, 2001; Hlavka, 2014; Barter et al., 2015). Hester (1992) argued that sexuality is key when looking at gendered violence, as female sexuality is seen as inferior to male sexuality. Holland et al.'s (1998) concept of the 'male-in-the-head' is useful here, where masculinity and male preferences are privileged in relationships, and so putting the male partner's needs before the female's is seen as normal. If this is the case, it is not hard to see why sexual abuse or pressure are considered an inherent part of relationships by some. However, we also need to be mindful that sometimes it is language that can be an issue. Meg was not disputing that sexual violence is a form of abuse; what she was disputing was that sexual violence is a form of domestic violence. This is something to take into consideration when asking younger people about their experiences.

Gender

None of the participants in the original sample considered gender in their definitions of abuse and Annie (see above), Daniel and Kate, suggested that violence can also be mutual when defining abusive relationships.

Daniel: Probably not very well. Because it's not something I'm very educated on.

Umm, I guess my best shot would be... where one or perhaps even both members feel, receives some form of physical or emotional abuse, umm, oh yeah, or feel forced to do anything that they don't want to (original sample).

Kate: Well any relationship that causes emotional or physical harm to either party, or both parties as it can often be (original sample).

This suggests that these participants did not consider violence within relationships to be a gendered issue; that violence can be experienced and perpetrated by females and males within intimate relationships. This could reflect a more widespread belief that violence in relationships is not a gendered issue, as set out in 2013 by the Home Office's extension of their definition of domestic violence. The mutual aspect brought up by these participants shows that they do not necessarily see abuse as based on an abuser-victim relationship but consider an abuser-abuser relationship as just as likely. Michael talked about mutual abuse in a different way.

Michael: I would say an abusive relationship is like... on a level very different to a bad relationship. An abusive relationship is where someone is properly controlled by their partner, whether through umm, fear or umm, aggression and like, or like kind of like manipulative control. Like I have seen people who have relationships with lots and lots of arguments and things, but I think if both people argue equally, then it's not abusive, it's just really bad (original sample).

Again, Michael did not talk about gender in his answer, but he suggested that when there is mutual violence, it is not an abusive. This is a view shared by Stark (2010), who does not include fighting in his definition of coercive control. Although Michael backtracked, he implied that abuse occurs in a relationship when one person in that relationship is 'weaker' than the other and 'can't handle it'. Though Michael was quick to take this back, this comment still reveals that he may believe that a certain *type* of person is more vulnerable to being abused in an intimate relationship, which is echoed by another participant, Kate, which we will see later when she talks about abuse not

being common in the relationships of young adults. However, Michael seemed to be stating that a relationship needs to contain an imbalance of power for the relationship to be considered as abusive, which is consistent with Stark's (2007) typology. However, unlike Stark, Michael did not talk about these imbalances of power having a gendered dimension.

Conversely, gender was much more present in Annie's answers (see above). Annie said that 'mostly women friends have experienced some form of abuse,' which suggests that, although she sees abuse as something that *can* be experienced by women and men, her personal experience tells her that her female friends have been more susceptible to abuse.

The participants in the COHSAR study were asked if they thought women and men experience domestic violence in the same ways, and so participants were prompted to talk about gender. In the 18-24-year-old age range, participants were more likely to believe that women and men experience abuse equally.

Janet: I don't think it probably makes that much difference...I don't expect being abused is the same, not the same, but being abused is being abused, whoever you are, whether you're male or female, or black or white, or gay or straight, whatever. It's still being abused (COHSAR 18-24).

Or they believed that it was easier for women to access support:

Hazel: I think today it's a lot easier for women - it's not easy but it's easier for women to access support whereas men it's still not really seen as they would ever experience domestic abuse.... How can a woman hurt a man? You know. 'How can she be abusive towards you?' this kind of um, perception em... Em, so I do think they, yeah, they do experience it differently I think (COHSAR 18-24).

And that male victims of domestic abuse were not taken as seriously due to a greater stigma on male victimisation:

Meg: I don't want to say it would be worse for men, but (pause) the social conditioning of men will make them experience it differently because of the power issues involved. Men are conditioned to be more powerful than women in

relationships, or to have power, or to not be victims, and if they are a victim of domestic violence, either at the hands of a man, or at the hands of a woman, then it's different... And then I think woman on men domestic violence is taken the least seriously of all and the stereotypes of having to say that you're a victim of domestic violence, and be a man, and what people would say, especially a straight man, and 'the sissy,' and that kind of comment would make it harder I think. I don't want to kind of say that it's easy to be a victim of domestic violence if you're a woman and you're being hit by a man, cos I'm sure it's not (COHSAR 18-24).

These ideas could perhaps stem from ideas of supposed equality between women and men. If women and men are supposed to be equal in society, then they can supposedly be equally victimised. Statistical evidence shows that this is far from the truth: more than one in four women in England and Wales have suffered some form of domestic violence; this is compared to 14% of men in England and Wales (ONS, 2017). Women are also more likely to have suffered **all** forms of domestic violence than men (ONS, 2017) and young women are more likely to be victimised in their relationships than young men (ONS, 2017). Studies that do report equality in some forms of abuse in younger people's relationships (for example, Halpern et al., 2001; Fox et al., 2013) tend to be quantitative in nature and do not look at the specific context or impact of abuse (Barter et al., 2009). It is this *perception* of equality that prevents gendered constructions of violence in young adults' relationships. This perception of equality was hinted at by participants in Mackay's (2013: 219) work, where participants spoke of the public idea of women having freedoms in contemporary society and women being able to make 'free-choices', being equated with women having full equality; if a woman chooses to do something and she has free-will, irrespective of any constraints, women have equality and therefore feminism is redundant. This lack of a gendered understanding of violence in abusive relationships amongst these participants could also be another reason why most participants neglected to mention sexual abuse in their definitions of abusive relationships.

In the 25-29 and 30-34-year-old age groups, the responses about gender were more diverse. Some participants saw violence as being perpetrated more commonly by men.

Gavin: I imagine normally it's the man abusing the woman probably yeah? (COHSAR 25-29)

Lyn: I think men and women have the ability to experience it in the same ways but, in the society we live in, men are less likely to, I believe, experience the manipulation that women can cos there's a lot more pathways out there in our society for manipulating women. (COHSAR 25-29)

Maxine: I think it does happen to women more than men. (COHSAR 30-34).

Some participants thought that gender did not impact the experience of abuse.

Amy: I'm still quizzing myself about that one really, because yeah, you could say that ultimately you know, men are bigger, men are stronger, men are more powerful...I think really it's every individual case, and what makes one person more or less vulnerable than the other, really. You know, yeah, women, women get very, very seriously beaten, but men also get very, very seriously beaten. You know, and I don't think you can say, I really don't think one can override the other. (COHSAR 30-34)

Valerie: it's just the male victims don't come forward as often I believe, it's my personal belief. I believe that there are a lot more male victims out there than we can account for...But I just think it's a human state where someone, there are people out there who do need to be in control whatever the cost. That's the way I personally choose to look at it. (COHSAR 25-29)

And some believed that the experience was more difficult for men:

Emma: If you consider that, er, a man who is in a abusive relationship nobody will...whereas if you're a woman you're immediately believed as long as it's physical, obviously. (COHSAR 30-34)

Arlene: I still think it's more difficult for men ... to talk about violence they've experienced and I don't know if that's more in hetero relationships, if it's felt because it's a woman that's being violent toward them, I don't know. (COHSAR 25-29)

That there was more uniformity in the youngest participants' answers regarding gender suggests that the gender-neutral Home Office definition of abuse may have had some impact.

The difference in the participants' answers regarding gender shows the divergence between their definitions of abusive relationship, which are not gendered, and their actual experiences, which are. With the government's contradictory messages regarding gender and domestic violence, it is unsurprising that young adults do not have clear ideas when it comes to the gendered nature of violence within relationships. Stark (2007; 2010) has argued that coercive control is gendered, but as has been argued throughout this chapter, if one only looks at specific incidents of violence, rather than the pattern of abuse, the workings of coercive control remain hidden and so does its gendered nature.

Insider Knowledge

Some of the participants used their own experiences of abusive relationships to define abusive relationships. In the original sample, Sarah used the experience of being abused by her ex-partner to shape her definition of an abusive relationship.

Sarah: It can be emotional, like mental, or physical. So I haven't really experienced any physical abuse from anybody, but when I was in this relationship with this one person for a long time there was a lot of mental abuse and bullying and just to sort of try and make you stay rather than anything else (original sample).

Again, using her own experience of being abused to shape her definition, Ruby talked only about emotionally abusive behaviour.

Ruby: Umm, probably not dissimilarly to the one I, my first relationship in that, it was... it involves quite a lot of manipulation and fear and just distress generally. There's no trust, you're not happy a lot of the time, you're willing to put up with, go through things you wouldn't normally be willing to go through (original sample).

Ruby suggested that it is only within the context of this relationship that she would put up with the kind of emotionally abusive behaviour. Heidi, however, used the experiences of her mother to define an abusive relationship.

Heidi: My mum re-married after she divorced my dad and that was definitely an abusive relationship. Umm, I think he pressured her into doing things that she didn't want to do, umm, and he physically attacked her, and he, he called her stupid a lot in an attempt to sort of belittle her, so, I think that's the kind of thing, that sort of behaviour is abusive. Umm, but also everyday forms of coercive control, I think. You know, like making your partner tell you exactly where they are all the time or who they are with, making them feel like they can't see certain people. Any of that stuff is still abusive, umm, it may be slightly different, a slightly different type of abuse, but it is still abusive (original sample).

Heidi was able to go into detail when explaining what an emotionally abusive or coercive controlling relationship can entail, which is perhaps because she witnessed this in her mother's relationship. These young women used their insider-knowledge based on their own experiences of abuse within their own relationships and the relationships of others to explain what they consider to be an abusive relationship.

However, Heidi and Ruby were reluctant to label their relationships as abusive, despite describing them as so. Heidi gave a comprehensive definition of abuse, narrated stories of her mother's abusive relationship and talked about her friends' abusive, as well as episodes of her current partner's emotional abuse towards her, as we will see later. Yet, when asked if she had ever been in an abusive relationship, she said she had not.

Heidi: Hmm, that's a very difficult question to answer I think. Umm... I think that it would probably be easier to get people to answer that question if it didn't feel quite so total. Umm, because, labelling something as an abusive relationship is quite, it's obviously very serious, and, for instance in my relationship at the moment, there have been elements that were abusive, even though I wouldn't say overall it was... So things like belittling me in public, that is abusive... but equally that is infrequent, so I wouldn't categorise the whole relationship as being abusive (original sample).

This suggests that although Heidi could define an abusive relationship and although she divulged details of her emotionally abusive experiences, she is averse to the idea of labelling her own relationship and partner as abusive, hence preventing herself from being labelled as a victim. Stark (2007) has argued that female victims of coercive controlling behaviour do not want the label of victim, as then the women feel like failures in a society which values female autonomy; women deny the label to avoid embarrassment. Likewise, both Jackson (2001) and Chung (2007) found that young women in their studies did not want to label themselves as victims and their boyfriends as abusers. This results in abuse staying hidden and abusive relationships remaining intact. Another explanation could be that Heidi was still in the relationship at the time of the interview. Whilst other participants who described their abusive experiences are talking about relationships from the past, they have the luxury of hindsight, and as found by Jackson (2001) and Towns and Scott (2013), victims/survivors did not realise that their relationships were abusive until the relationship ended. Heidi may well not have wanted her relationship to end and so does not want to label it as abusive.

Ruby was also cautious in labelling her relationship as abusive, despite stating that she would define an abusive relationship as 'probably not dissimilarly' to her first relationship.

Ruby: I don't know. I mean, I say that I was in a bad, bad, unhealthy relationship, but I'm not sure whether it classifies, I guess (original sample).

Perhaps Ruby did not want to label herself as a victim. However, it could also be that Ruby was genuinely unsure whether her relationship was abusive. Perhaps Ruby did not see the behaviour as *severe* enough to warrant being named as abuse; or because abusive behaviours have become so normalised that she is unsure as to whether these behaviours can be considered abusive or just a part of a bad relationship. As

mentioned previously, other studies have found that episodic violence is sometimes considered normal within relationships (Kearney, 2001; Wood, 2001; Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2011; Barter et al., 2015) Perhaps it is not that Ruby was reluctant to label herself as a victim, but more that she did not recognise the relationship that she was in as being abusive due to the normalisation of certain abusive behaviours.

As with the original sample, there were some participants in the COHSAR sample who used their own experiences when defining domestic abuse. In the 18-24 age range, two participants used their insider knowledge to define an abusive relationship – Barbara and Meg.

When Barbara was asked if she had ever experienced domestic abuse, she mentioned that her mother was in a controlling relationship.

Barbara: No but I think, um things that she did would verge on it. If that became a regular thing, like every day, then I would say it would be a domestic violence relationship, but I wouldn't say it was because... There wasn't the - through the experience of me mam, the way she was controlled and the way it was an everyday thing, I wouldn't say it was (COHSAR 18-24).

She did not see her relationship as being as bad as her mother's, so she did not define her relationship as domestically violent. However, she did state that if she experienced the abusive behaviours more frequently, then she would have considered it an abusive relationship. What Barbara says here is like what both Heidi and Ruby from the original sample said; Barbara does not deny that her partner perpetrated abusive behaviours, but she does not see these behaviours as severe enough to constitute domestic violence, based on what she witnessed in her mother's relationship. Meg on the other hand talked about how domestic violence can encompass many forms of abuse:

Meg: It's such a big thing to define. I think the stereotypical domestic violence is the battered wife, but it's more than that. It's somebody taking away somebody else's power and not allowing them to live to the best of their abilities... Somebody taking away somebody else's power and not allowing them to live, and that being done through a number of ways... but no, I haven't had that (COHSAR 18-24).

Meg finished by stating that she had never experienced domestic violence. However, as explained above, Meg had experienced sexual violence. Meg did not consider this sexual violence to be domestic violence, as she was not living with this partner and she did not experience any other abusive behaviours. Meg argued that sexual violence is more common than domestic violence. Here, the issue could be with the term 'domestic violence' itself; as Meg considers domestic violence to be something that happens when partners are living with each other. However, it could also be, like with Heidi and Ruby in the original sample, that she is reluctant to label the experience as domestic violence, as she does not want to consider herself a victim of this form of abuse.

In the 25-29-year-old group, Arlene used her own experience to define an abusive relationship:

Arlene: I think (laughs) I think it, it's when someone like says things or acts in a way that makes someone else feel erm, like powerless and makes them feel erm, like vulnerable erm. It's about that making you feel, because when I look back as well I think that I'm quite an assertive women yet I have been made to feel powerless and very vulnerable when I've been in, at times in relationships erm, and that's scary really (COHSAR 25-29).

For Arlene, abusive relationships are about power. Valerie, also in the 25-29-year-old age group, used her experience to simplify the definition of domestic violence.

Valerie: Anything which takes power and control away from one person in a relationship and gives it to another. Quite simply to be honest I mean, I know there's the big Home Office definition and things but I think its quite simply about who's in control and how they use that and if they use it, if they use it to control someone negatively then its domestic abuse.

Interviewer: and it's very clear that you have experience that?

Valerie: Oh it is. I mean I grew up in a household where my dad was an abuser, he was a perpetrator so it's surprising that I didn't pick up on it to be honest but you just don't when you're in it, you don't realise until later do you? (COHSAR 25-29).

Valerie suggested that she should have been able to recognise abuse in her own relationship, as her father was a perpetrator.

What is interesting here is that the 25-29-year-old participants who used their 'insider-knowledge' to define abusive relationships used this knowledge to confirm that they had experienced domestic violence. However, those in the 18-24-year-old-age group used their knowledge to deny that they had been in a domestic violence relationship. Furthermore, participants in the 30-34-year-old age group did not use their own experiences to confirm their definitions of domestic violence.

The 18-24-year-old participants in the COHSAR sample were similar to those in the original sample who used their insider-knowledge to define abusive relationships. Perhaps this reluctance to label their own experiences as domestic violence is due to their reluctance to take on the label of victim (Jackson 2001; Chung 2007), as mentioned above. However, perhaps the stigma of being labelled as a victim is considered more real for these younger participants. There is now a greater perception of equality in society (Mackay, 2013) and women are expected to be self-sufficient (Stark, 2007). Therefore, it is feasible to argue that younger women are more likely to struggle with the label of victim, as it does not fit with their world-view of greater female independence; the label of victim is at odds with the image of an autonomous female (Stark, 2007) which is perhaps more ingrained in the psyche of younger people.

How Common is Abuse within Young Adults' Relationships?

As this question was only asked to participants in the original sample, this section only analyses answers retrieved in these interviews. In the original sample, five young adults recounted stories of friends who had experienced abuse in their relationship and seven participants - five female and two male - described experiencing abusive behaviours in their own relationships. Each participant was asked whether they believed that abuse is common in the relationships of people around the same age as them. Those participants who had experience of abusive relationships all stated that abuse is common within the relationships of young adults. This suggests that their

experiences gave them an insider-knowledge to recognise how abuse works within relationships, which enabled them to see how common abuse is.

Most of the participants, six females and two males, recognised that abuse is common within relationships of young adults and their answers have already been discussed in the relation to the themes above. However, two males and three females did not consider abuse to be common in young adults' relationships, so these are the participants we will turn to now. Esther believed that if any of her friends had been in an abusive relationship, they would have told her.

Esther: Umm, not that I, I've never experienced any of my friends, my age will tell me that they've been through that, so. In my experience it's always been of an older generation.

Again, Michael was of the belief that abuse is more common in the relationships of older adults or teenagers.

Michael: My age? No I don't think so. I think it was much more common when people were sort of learning to have relationships. Sort of like when they were like fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. And then I think later again. But I think, around the people I know, maybe it's a university and there are lots of kind of middle-class, educated people, so... maybe there are less, emotionally, that's not right, I don't know, yeah. I don't think it's that common.

Michael hinted at a class-based explanation of why he does not consider abuse to be common within the relationships of people around the same age as himself, stating that his peer group is made up of 'middle-class, educated people', implying that abusive relationships occur in low-socioeconomic groups. Although he stopped and corrected himself before expanding further, his comment reflects a lack of awareness that abuse can happen in **all** relationships, in all social locations. Although official

statistics do show that women from lower socioeconomic, less educated, groups are more likely to be victimised, the statistics also show that women from other backgrounds can still experience abuse (ONS, 2014). Furthermore, violence is more prevalent in the relationships of young women and young men aged 16-24 than in those of older generations, though the prevalence is higher for female victimisation (ONS: 2017). Consequently, Michael's assumption that abuse is suffered by those who are older is incorrect. Kate, on the other hand, did not deny that abuse can happen in relationships of people around the same age as herself, but she just did not consider them to be a common occurrence.

Kate: Umm, I wouldn't say it is really common, but I have heard of things where it is obviously quite an abusive relationship. My current boyfriend prior, his current girlfriend then tried to pressure him into sexual things. But I think, it was just his character, he just sort of threw it off and then walked away really, whereas someone else might have taken that a bit differently.

Kate implied that victims of abuse are of a certain 'character', or personality, and so those who do not have this personality are more capable of ending abusive relationships. This has obvious gender implications and verges on victim-blaming. She said that her boyfriend's ex-partner *tried* to pressure him into 'sexual things' which means that his ex-partner was unsuccessful. When young women talk of being pressurised into sexual activity, as is also true of young women in this study, they talk of this pressure being persistent and of feeling as though they had to comply. Young women do not feel as though they have the option of leaving the relationship, whereas Kate's boyfriend felt he had the ability to do so.

Both Daniel and Finola had very similar answers to one another.

Daniel: No, I don't think they are common. I suppose they probably exist, but from what I know they are not common.

Finola: I wouldn't say common, but I suppose it happens and people don't quite think about the fact it happens.

Daniel did not deny that abuse happens within the relationships of young adults, he just does not consider this abuse to be common. However, Daniel also said 'from what I know' which suggests he wanted to make it clear that he was just talking from his experience. Finola's comment that 'people don't quite think about the fact it happens' shows that she has some awareness that violence in the intimate relationships of young adults is hidden.

The answers from the participants who did not consider abuse to be common within the relationships of young adults highlights how hidden abuse is. Despite statistical evidence showing that younger age groups are more susceptible to abuse within intimate relationships than older age groups (ONS, 2017), abusive relationships are considered more common amongst older generations. Perhaps the reason for this is that until recently, awareness campaigns surrounding domestic violence have concentrated on violence in the relationships of older adults.

Interestingly, two of the participants who believed that violence is not common in the relationships of young adults were also more hesitant when asked to define an abusive relationship. Daniel, when asked how he would define an abusive relationship said 'Probably not very well. Because it is not something that I am educated on' and Finola said:

Finola: I'm not sure really. Depends on, there's different types of abuse you have to consider, I suppose. So it's basically making someone do something that they don't necessarily want to do or making them feel uncomfortable, yes.

Daniel and Fiona were asserting that they were not very knowledgeable about abusive relationships, again showing that they are talking from their lack of experience. None

of the participants who stated that they considered violence to be uncommon had experienced abuse within their own relationships and neither did they speak of abuse being present in the relationships of their friends or relatives. This lack of experience and knowledge surrounding abusive relationships could be why these participants do not consider abusive relationships to be common in the relationships of young adults.

Although most of the participants in the original sample considered abuse to be common in young adults' relationships, some participants spoke about abuse being common in terms of specific acts and incidents of violence. Stark (2010) argued that we should not concentrate on specific incidents of violence, but we should look to see whether incidents of violence or controlling behaviour happen in isolation or as part of a pattern of violent behaviours. Other participants highlighted how difficult it is to determine whether violence is present in some relationships. Participants therefore reinforce Stark's (2010) assertion that to reveal the workings of a coercive controlling relationship, we must look at the circumstances in which abusive acts are situated.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that participants had varying definitions of abusive relationships and some had trouble applying these definitions to their own relationships, despite their abusive experiences. One point of agreement amongst the participants was that emotional abuse is the most prominent form of abuse, and this was usually described as something that was ongoing throughout a relationship. Though the language used by some participants seems to suggest that emotional abuse is not as damaging as physical abuse. Participants also tended to talk about abuse as though it is not gendered and as a result, some spoke about abuse being mutual and sexual abuse was rarely mentioned by the participants. Although the majority of those interviewed in the original sample considered abuse to be common

within the relationships of young adults, this was usually talked about in terms of specific violent incidents, rather than as the ongoing pattern of abuse which defines coercive control. Some participants did explain that abuse can go unnoticed and this is because abusive behaviours can seem to be part of a normal relationship from the outside. A minority group of participants in the original sample, who had no experience of abuse in their own or their friends' relationships, were adamant that abuse was more common in other age groups.

Chapter 6: Findings Chapter Three: Participants' Experiences of Abusive Relationships

This chapter focuses on participants' abusive relationship experiences. Thirteen participants were interviewed in the original study and of these thirteen, seven participants described being in abusive relationships. In the COHSAR study sample, seventeen out of the twenty-one participants described experiencing abusive behaviours.

The chapter begins by looking at participants' experiences of victimisation and this chapter is split into different sections for different forms of abuse. These subsections were informed by the way in which the data were categorised into themes during analysis and reflected the different forms of abuse experienced by the participants but were not necessarily indicative of the words or terms used by participants to describe these experiences. The sub-categories for emotional forms of abuse were informed by Stark's (2007) typology of coercive control. Emotional forms of abuse were explored by looking at range of experiences these included: including micro-regulation of behaviour and surveillance; technological forms of abuse; being made to feel afraid of a partner; threats of harm from a partner and insults from a partner. The chapter then addresses physical abuse from a partner; and experiences of sexual violence including pressure. Following this the chapter then moves on to look at participants' ideas surrounding why abuse occurred, the ending of abusive relationships, the age of the abusive partner and living arrangements of the participants when abuse occurred in their relationships. Lastly, participants' accounts of their own perpetration of emotional and physical violence are considered.

Emotionally Abusive Behaviours

In the previous chapter, participants stated that emotional abuse was the most prevalent form of abuse experienced. Emotional abuse was the most common form of victimisation experienced in both the original and COHSAR samples. Emotionally abusive experiences most commonly included control tactics, such as micro-regulation of behaviour; surveillance; insults from a partner; being threatened and being made to feel afraid of a partner. These are now looked at in turn.

Micro-regulation and Surveillance

In the original sample, Alison, Annie, Sarah, Robert and Ruby spoke about how their partners tried to control their behaviour. Alison felt like she always had to tell her partner where she was going, who she was seeing and what she was doing.

Alison: I think, obviously I didn't have to because he couldn't force me to, I felt this kind of thing, this idea that I owed it to him, which was the fact that there was no trust in the relationship. Umm, but in my mind that was like the kind of right thing to do as a partner is to give that kind of information (original sample).

Alison said that although she felt that her partner did not *force* her to provide him with the details of her movements, she was made to feel this was an obligation of being in a relationship. When asked if this was something that happened throughout this relationship, Alison explained that it was.

Alison: Uh yeah it was, but again I didn't realise it...because we were long distance for a little while for university, umm, he would call me the day after I'd gone out and just kind of interrogate me in a quite subversive way, umm, and things like that and I'd just,

and I'd feel like guilty if someone flirted with me or things like that, even though I hadn't never reciprocated (original sample).

Although Alison did not feel she was overtly forced into providing the information, she described his questioning of her as an interrogation suggesting that this was experienced as coercion. Alison also talked about how she would feel guilty if someone attempted to flirt with her even though she did not flirt back, suggesting that she was fearful that her partner would find out and of his reaction. Abusive partners often instil in their victims the idea that they are always there to modify their victims' behaviour (Stark, 2007). Sarah spoke about trust as a catalyst for her partner's behaviour.

Sarah: Because we didn't have a lot of trust for each other and he used to demand that he knew where I was going when I was going out (original sample).

Sarah's use of the word 'demand' suggested that her abusive partner was forceful in his requests to remain informed of her whereabouts and that this was not just out of curiosity or interest on his part. Consequently, Sarah felt as though she had no alternative but to tell her partner, reflecting Alison's perceptions. Similarly, Robert was made to tell an ex-girlfriend where he was going, who he was seeing and what he was doing and saw this as being because she did not trust him.

Robert: Well they didn't trust me probably or thought that I was going to do something that they weren't OK with like see a girl that they were jealous of (original sample).

Jealousy was understood as a motivating factor behind Robert's partner's behaviour. Trust was a reoccurring theme; participants repeatedly explained their partners' controlling behaviours because of the lack of trust in their relationships. Ruby used to see her abusive partner's wanting to know everything about her movements as proof that he cared for her.

Ruby: That was in the first relationship, they would want to know everything about, umm, where I was going, you know, if I was seen talking to, you know, someone else, I'd accused of, you know, oh you're flirting with them or you're not being respectful of the relationship. And in some ways I guess I saw that as a positive thing at the time, because I thought it was like they actually cared, whereas it probably isn't, it was probably more of a negative thing now when I look back (original sample).

Previous studies by Chung (2007), Barter et al. (2009), Wood et al. (2011) and Toscano (2014) also found that controlling behaviours in a relationship were considered an expression of affection by some women and girls. Ruby explained that although she saw his behaviour as positive at the time, she now sees it as a negative aspect of her relationship, which correlates with Jackson's (2001) and Towns and Scott's (2013) finding that some young women do not necessarily realise they are in an abusive relationship at the time.

The controlling behaviours and surveillance reported by Annie within her abusive relationship were much more all-encompassing.

Annie: And he would try and distance me from my friends by saying things to me, umm, he'd threaten me quite a lot, umm, try and control what I did... And I remember once when I was at a job interview that took about an hour or so and he tried to report me as missing person to the Police because I hadn't replied to some messages. Umm, so there was a lot of things like that. I mean he used to work for the [Health Sector], umm and he told me that he had looked at my medical records without my consent. Well, he wouldn't have been able to do that anyway because he was just an administrator. Umm, and then he worked for a phone company on the tariff, umm, for the company that I was with for my phone and he used to tell me that he could look at where I was by putting my phone number into some machine. Umm, and I don't know if that's true or not but that used to quite scare me (original sample).

From Annie's description, we can clearly see that her partner used a range of tactics and threats to control and regulate her behaviour, for example tracking her whereabouts with the intention of making her feel as though he was aware of what she was doing at all times and that she could not keep anything from him. This led Annie to self-regulate her behaviour to gain her abusive partner's approval even when he was not present. Although in the interview Annie questioned whether he could access her medical files or track her location, this frightened her at the time. This kind of monitoring is used by abusive partners to ensure that victims behave in a way that the abuser wants even when the abuser and victim are not together (Stark, 2007; Towns and Scott, 2013).

Annie also talked a bit more about how her partner used to try to control her relationships with her friends.

Annie: Say if I had been out with my friends and then I went to see him, and I was late, he'd be really annoyed. So I felt like the next time I went out with my friends, I couldn't do that. So that kind of controlled me in a way, like I had to really stick to these parameters that he'd set (original sample).

As her abusive partner reacted negatively if she didn't keep to his, Annie would try to adapt her behaviour to avoid this. Stark (2007) has argued that victims of coercive control often adhere to rules set by their abuser not because they do not have the capacity to resist, but because they are avoiding the repetition of past behaviours. Toscano (2014) asserted that female participants in her study felt liable for their partners' abuse and so hoped that if they adapted their own behaviour, for example by being more loving, that the abuse would stop. In addition, Towns and Scott (2013) found that the young women in their study felt that they had to adapt their personalities and how they socialised to fit with rules set by their partners. When abusive partners, such as Annie's, restrict or control their victims' contact with friends, this is an attempt to isolate their victims, keeping them vulnerable and reliant on the

abuser, whilst also being successful in keeping violence hidden and sustaining an abusive relationship (Stark, 2007), as the control element of these behaviours are not noticed or are seen as part of a love relationship (Towns and Scott, 2013).

All the participants who spoke of being monitored and controlled by their partners described this as an ongoing aspect of their relationships, and in the case of Alison and Annie, this was present from the beginning. Control from the start of a relationship is something which Toscano (2014) also commonly found amongst her participants. The control and monitoring experienced by participants in this current study were not sporadic occurrences, they were repeated and ongoing behaviours consistent with Stark's (2007) typology of coercive control. Stark (2007) argued that only females are usually the victims of coercive controlling violence. In the original sample, this form of abuse was experienced by mainly female participants, however, monitoring and surveillance was also experienced by one transgender male, Robert. Though, as will be shown, this did not occur in the context of a coercive controlling relationship.

Participants in the COHSAR sample also talked about the ways their ex-partners would attempt to regulate and control their behaviour. As in the original sample, participants talked about how their ex-partners would try to control what they were doing, who they were seeing and where they were going.

Hazel: He'd pick me up from school, he'd walk me to school and that at the time I thought was fantastic but now I realise it's, it wasn't he was completely controlling me. He'd wait for me after school you know and if I said I'm just going to go into town with some – 'no you're coming home with me.' 'Okay, fine.' You know it was very, very controlling but at the time I couldn't see that. (COHSAR 18-24)

Jealousy was considered a motivation for this form of controlling behaviour. Arlene talked about how her life became about just her and her partner.

Arlene: I didn't really seem to be doing anything else outside the relationship and the relationship consumed like the whole of me. (COHSAR 25-29)

She did not see her friends or go out with anyone besides her partner.

Karen: Yeah he was quite controlling. Like I didn't see it at the time but looking back on it and the way it made me feel erm. He was very jealous he wouldn't let me well like, not he wouldn't *let* me but you know if I had other male friends he had issues with it erm (COHSAR 25-29).

Karen's emphasis on 'not he wouldn't *let* me' suggests that although he did not stop Karen from having male friends, her ex-partner made it difficult for her. Often, when their ex-partners made things difficult, participants modified their behaviour to adapt to what their ex-partners wanted. Valerie would give into her partner to prevent repercussions. When Valerie was asked whether she was aware that her ex-partner was making all the decisions in the relationship, Valerie said that she was aware but 'it was less stress' to let it be like that.

Valerie: It was never abusive in the violent sense... it was easier to say yes than it was to say no (COHSAR 25-29).

Valerie suggests that if she did not comply, problems would arise. As we will see later, fear of what might happen ensures compliance from the abuser (Stark, 2007).

In the 30-34-year-old age group, Sarah said her ex-partner would get angry if Sarah saw her friends.

Sarah: If I saw my work friends, she'd kick off. She did shift work so she used to just come in. I'd leave her a key, and she'd just sort of come in at one o'clock in the morning... And I'd already be asleep and she'd wake me up and say 'right, who was you with today, who did you see?' And I'm like, 'I was at work.' 'What did you do when you got home from work?' I'd say 'oh I popped down Maureen's for a bit.' 'Bit of what?' And I'm like, 'well you know, just, had a bit of tea, had a chat.' 'Well you work with her all day, why do you spend so much time with her socially?' And I said 'cos she's my friend.' And that was always causing arguments (COHSAR 30-34).

Amy's ex-partner also tried to prevent her from seeing her friends.

Amy: No, it had the reverse effect, because I thought, you know, I'm, I'm very familiar with domestic violence and all the issues of power and control and the wheels and the models and all that sort of thing and I thought 'no, no, no, no. Not going there. Not doing it' (COHSAR 30-34).

Amy was fully aware that her ex-partner was trying to control her, so she resisted this behaviour by seeing her friends anyway. Despite this resistance, Amy's partner did not give up trying to control her. Stark (2007) proposed that women resist controlling behaviours, but the problem is that abusive men often find new ways to counteract this and regain control.

These surveillance and regulatory techniques were like those found in the original sample and were found in all age ranges. This suggests that there are similarities in how individuals experience controlling behaviours across different age groups.

Overall, fourteen out of the twenty-one participants in the COHSAR study said that their ex-partner had attempted to regulate their behaviour in some way. Most of these participants were female and fairly evenly split amongst the different age groups – four participants aged 18-24, five participants aged 25-29 and five aged 30-34.

Technology

Participants spoke about how technology was used to control or manipulate their behaviour. Some participants in the original sample spoke of interrogating phone calls and text messages, which has been a theme in other studies (see Towns and Scott, 2012; Ringrose et al., 2012; Barter et al., 2015; Stonard et al., 2015). As well as telling Annie that he used technology to track her whereabouts, Annie's abusive partner would also check through her phone.

Annie: Like the looking at my phone, looking at who I was texting other men or anything (original sample).

Annie explained that he checked her phone to see if she was communicating with other men, suggesting that jealousy was a driver for his controlling behaviour. This is reflected in Sarah's account of receiving pestering text messages from her abusive partner and explained this as

Sarah: Because they weren't happy that I was going out with other people that wasn't him (original sample).

This further exemplifies the lack of trust within Sarah's relationship, but it also suggests that Sarah's abusive partner wanted to keep Sarah away from her friends to isolate Sarah and keep her with him.

Reflecting the original sample, participants in all age groups sampled from the COHSAR study reported receiving unwanted calls and text messages from their abusive partners, but it seemed to be slightly more common in the younger two age groups sampled. Only one participant in the 30-34-year-old age group, Maxine, reported receiving unwanted text messages, which she received even when the relationship had ended.

Maxine: I went to Thailand and I took my mobile phone with me and he would phone all the time and text all the time. (COHSAR 30-34)

However, three participants in the 25-29-year-old age group and three participants in the 18-24-year-old age group reported this behaviour. It could be that this behaviour is more common in the younger age groups because younger people are more likely to consider technology to be an integral part of their lives.

Unwanted and persistent text messages aiming to control their behaviour was the main form of technological abuse received by participants in both samples in this study. However, Ruby, along with receiving unwanted calls and text messages from her abusive partner, also had a different experience of being manipulated using technology.

Ruby: On one occasion, they essentially blackmailed me into sending photos and, umm as soon as I sent it, umm, he cut contact, in the same way as he usually did and those photos got sent round to all his friends and that entire school, so there was a massive thing for me (original sample).

She felt she had to send the photographs and sending the photographs resulted in her receiving threats. Ruby's experience of being coerced into sending explicit photographs to her partner is unfortunately not an uncommon occurrence. (Zweig et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2015). Girls are often harassed into sending sexual photographs of themselves via new technologies and many have had explicit photographs shared without wanting them to be shared (Ringrose et al., 2012; Zweig et al., 2013; Girlguiding, 2013b; Wood et al., 2015). Similarly, Wood et al. (2015) in their European study found that girls who had been coerced into sending sent sexual messages were also more likely to have experienced other forms of abuse in their relationships.

Although other studies have found that the sending and receiving of explicit images is a relatively common occurrence amongst younger people (Ringrose et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2015), Ruby was the only participant to talk about her experience of this and none of the male participants talked about this at all. This was even though **all** participants in the original sample were asked if they had ever received (or sent) any pestering text messages, emails or social media messages. This behaviour was not reported by participants in the COHSAR study either. This could be due to the age of the participants in this study, as other studies which examined how technology is used within romantic relationships have looked at a slightly younger age group (Ringrose et al., 2012; 2013; Girlguiding, 2013b; Barter et al., 2015). However, it could also be that participants had received explicit images and messages, but they did not consider these messages to be 'pestering'; participants may well have considered the sending and requesting of these messages to be a normal aspect of relationships (Barter et al., 2015) or participants may not have seen these messages as undesirable. This would also imply that even if other participants had sent or received explicit text messages, these messages did not impact on them negatively.

Technology can and is being used by some abusive partners to further extend their mechanisms of control, despite the differences found in this study compared to other studies. This form of abuse is maybe experienced more frequently by younger people.

Being Afraid of a Partner

In the original sample, Robert, Alison, Annie, Ruby and Heidi all stated that they had felt afraid of their partners at some point, but they spoke of this fear in different ways. Alison felt afraid of her abusive partner when he was yelling at her or when he was drunk.

Alison: No, it was just, just screaming matches and like, putting me down and like when he was drunk or just horrible things like locking the door, not letting me leave, things like that. Umm, so I was afraid...I kind of trusted him not to hurt me (original sample).

Alison was afraid of her partner's behaviour especially when he prevented her from leaving, however she finished her response by saying that she also believed he would not hurt her, although she acknowledged that this is strange. We can infer by Alison's responses throughout the interview which refer to her partner's emotional hurtful behaviour that she meant physical harm. This is particularly curious as her partner was also physically abusive towards her in the relationship, and this will be discussed later in the physical abuse section of this chapter. Alison said that he would always apologise after he was abusive. Similarly, Heidi talked about how she is sometimes afraid of her partner when he is angry or when he takes his aggression out on objects.

Heidi: Occasionally when my current partner is angry he gets sort of a steely tone to his voice and his eyes go black... I can just tell that he's really angry, umm... and that's a bit scary. And also sometimes when he's really angry with his computer, he'll hit his computer, which is stupid and I've told him that that makes me feel threatened, umm, even though he says that he will never hit me, the fact that he hits his computer for something that is just really insignificant, umm, doesn't exactly make me feel completely safe (original sample).

Heidi talked about how this behaviour scared her and suggested that although he tells her that he would not hurt her, she is still afraid because he will hit objects for no apparent reason. Heidi also said that when she did tell him how scared she felt his response was mostly positive.

Heidi: The tone changes and he apologises and I think it sort of makes him, it brings him back into the room (original sample).

Alison and Heidi's descriptions of their partners, as abusive but also that they trusted their partners not to hurt them, seem to depict them as though they are two different people: when they were angry and not angry. This is reminiscent of Towns and Adams (2000) and Enander (2011) who found that women divide their abusive partners into two people and this encourages victimised women to continue with the relationship. Like Alison's abusive partner, Heidi's partner always apologised after he scares her. Wood (2001), Fraser (2005) and Donovan and Hester (2011) all found that abusive partners would be loving in between abusive episodes, which then made it hard to leave.

Ruby talked about how she was afraid when her partner sent photographs of her around her school.

Ruby: I was terrified because it was at that point I was realising this, this person is capable of far more than I thought they were, which is scary, yeah (original sample).

However, Ruby also spoke about being afraid when her partner became physically abusive.

Ruby: On one occasion he did, he did hit me...and that was right towards the end. I think that was the most scared I'd ever felt by him (original sample).

She said that she had felt afraid before this event, but this was her most frightening experience within that relationship. This event led to her ending the relationship, which will be discussed more later, implying that the fear Ruby felt from this incident meant she could no longer remain with her partner. As alluded to previously, Enander (2011) found that it was only when women in her study realised that their partners were abusive that they actively sought to end the relationship. It was only when Ruby realised that her partner was abusive and frightening that she was active in ending the relationship. In contrast, Robert was more afraid of what his partner would do to herself.

Robert: She was quite unpredictable... so I didn't know what she could do like. If she would harm herself or if she would. I don't think she would have ever harmed me, but if she would have harmed herself or ran away from her house... I was afraid of that (original sample).

Robert's partner had a range of mental health problems that she used to project on to him, so this made him afraid that she would hurt herself but not him. This fear worked to help sustain this relationship as Robert was too afraid to leave her in case she harmed herself. This will be considered more in the next section of this chapter which explicitly looks at abusive partners' threats to harm themselves. Like Robert, Annie's partner would also threaten her and self-harm when she tried to end the relationship.

Annie: And other times when I tried to leave... he would threaten me and hurt himself a lot (original sample).

Annie spoke about being afraid due to her partner's controlling behaviour and her fear of being alone.

Annie: I think it was scared of being alone or like someone can make you feel like that without them you're not really able to cope or that they are really important in your life. Umm, which now, looking back I know that was kind of trick that was used on me (original sample).

Consequently, Annie was afraid of ending the relationship as her abusive partner had convinced her that she was dependent upon him and she was also afraid of being able to cope alone. She later realised that was part of her partner's manipulation to help sustain the relationship. Stark (2007) argues that victims of coercive control lose their independence as abusers isolate and dominate their victims in such a way that victims become dependent upon their abusers, and Annie's experiences in her abusive relationship seem akin to this. Wood (2001) also found that keeping a boyfriend was considered important for self-confidence amongst the female participants in her study, and Annie's fear of being alone ties in with this; she did not feel confident about not being in a relationship. However, as detailed in the chapter on love and relationships, Annie stated that she would not now prioritise having a boyfriend and would prefer to remain single if a relationship did not make her happy. Threats to harm oneself are a common tactic used by abusive partners to sustain relationships, and this will be considered in the next section.

Participants in the COHSAR study also talked about how they were afraid of their partners. In the 18-24-year-old age group, Hazel said that she was also still afraid of her ex-partner.

Hazel: When I go back to mum and dad's now I see him about in town and I – it's still I get like, my stomach totally knots up and I get really shaky and try avoid him and stuff (COHSAR 18-24).

When Hazel sees her ex-partner, she suffers symptoms of anxiety. In a similar way to Robert in the original sample, Barbara, also in the 18-24-year-old age group, was afraid of what her ex-partner would do to herself.

Barbara: I was frightened for her, and what she was doing to herself, and frightened for like her emotional wellbeing. But I was also frightened for me own safety (COHSAR 18-24).

Unlike Robert, Barbara was also afraid for herself.

Like Heidi, Arlene (25-29) talked about how she would become frightened when her partner threw objects.

Arlene: When I finished with him he started punching in walls and he used to throw things at me, only like pens and stuff but when someone's in a fit of rage it's quite scary (COHSAR 25-29).

Again, this behaviour manifested when Arlene ended the relationship. Similarly, Karen (25-29) was afraid at the time of her ex's 'unpredictability' and what would happen if she did end the relationship.

Karen: I was sort of scared of his reaction. I just didn't want to see it (COHSAR 25-29).

Kearney (2001) found in her study of American qualitative research reports that one common reason for staying in abusive relationships was fear of what the abuser would do if the victimised woman should leave. In the 30-34-year-old age group, Bruce said he was afraid of his partner because of past incidents.

Bruce: Fear came from the fact he hurt me physically and hurt my relationships or hurt my, damaged my property (COHSAR 30-34).

Bruce's partner controlled him by keeping him in a state of fear in case past incidents were repeated. Also in this age group, Maxine said that she was still afraid of her ex-partner.

Maxine: I thought if I came back... he, I would bump into him and I was really frightened and I still am to this day (COHSAR 30-34).

Stark (2007) argued that abusers were successful in their victimisations as fear is used as a way of ensuring compliance.

Abusive Partners Threatening to Harm Themselves

As stated above, Annie, from the original sample, said her abusive partner would hurt himself or make threats.

Annie: The time when I finally did end up breaking up with him, he threatened to kill himself and me at the same time by pushing us off in front of a train (original sample).

These threats to harm himself came when Annie tried to end the relationship. Likewise, Heidi, who had once tried to end the relationship with her abusive partner, was met with similar threats.

Heidi: Umm, there was an episode where he was just, he just completely flew off the handle over something really insignificant and I said, fuck it... I'm leaving now, at which point he started to make silly voices umm, at me... call me a bitch and a liar, umm, and then after I had arranged someone to come and pick me up, told me that he regularly thinks about killing himself (original sample).

Again, it was only when Heidi tried to leave the relationship that her partner revealed that he often had suicidal thoughts. It's telling that prior to this revelation he had been insulting her and it was only when Heidi had planned her exit that he decided to talk about ending his life. Perhaps this was because he realised that Heidi leaving the relationship was a genuine possibility. Robert's partner would also threaten to harm herself.

Robert: And she put her problems on me, like, I was always forced to be at her side at all times. She would like come at my house at like 10pm and tell me like oh I need you right now, I'm going to like commit suicide, you have to see me right now and I was like I'm seventeen I can't deal with that right now (original sample).

In Robert's case, his partner did not wait until the relationship was breaking down to talk about ending her life, but would talk about suicide, in order to keep Robert close to her. This behaviour was used as a form of emotional manipulation to get him to remain in the relationship.

In the COHSAR sample, one participant in each of the sampled age ranges said that their partners made threats to harm themselves. Like the participants above, Anthony's (18-24) partner threatened to hurt himself when Anthony broke up with him:

Anthony: After it all finished... I had an exam at nine o'clock in the morning. He rang me up and that he was (pause) I think he was like ten feet away from killing himself (COHSAR 18-24).

In a different way, both Arlene (25-29) and Bruce (30-34) said that their partners would make threats to harm themselves when the attention was not on them:

Arlene: If he didn't like certain things I was saying or certain things that I wanted to do like with other, like my friends or whatever then I'd feel he'd put a dampener on it by all of a sudden being very low again or sort of saying that...didn't want to live anymore and all that kind of stuff when I got back. I think there were times when he genuinely felt like that but I also think there were times when that was being used and it panicked me like hell (COHSAR 25-29).

Bruce: So on one of my birthdays I remember he went and stood over the edge of the [river] and tried to throw himself into the [river] (COHSAR 30-34).

Again, threats to harm themselves were being used to control the relationship. Jackson (2001) argued that ending abusive relationships can be difficult, as abusers can become coercive or frightening when victims try to leave. These emotional disclosures can be considered a form of emotional manipulation or coercion to create sympathy in

the victim towards their abuser to make them feel as though they have to stay in the relationship.

Insults from a Partner

Participants in the original sample commonly received insults from their partners, with eight participants in total stating experience of this. When talking about this aspect of their partners' behaviour, some participants responded by saying that it did not significantly affect them.

Daniel: No, I mean, might have been mild, but nothing more proper (original sample).

Megan: Umm, not really. Not things that I really take to heart (original sample).

Michael: I would say yes, but it's not something I can specifically remember. I think it's the sort of thing that I probably erased from my memory, but yeah, I think so. I think like, umm, me and [ex-girlfriend] were not so good to each other when we were in that patch, so we probably did (original sample).

The above extracts illustrate that for these participants, insults from a partner were not regarded as a serious problem and did not negatively impact their relationships. In contrast, other participants did report a negative impact from this form of behaviour. Both Heidi and Annie talked about being called a 'bitch' in arguments, which is a gendered insult (Lees, 1986). 'Bitch' is a derogatory word most often used against women, which can also be seen as a form of sexist language, another way for these abusive partners to demean their victims. Alison, Annie, Heidi, Sarah and Ruby all spoke of screaming matches and arguments with their abusive partners. For example, Ruby said that arguments were very regular in her relationship with her abusive partner.

Ruby: It got really bad probably about a year in maybe, it was really sort of volatile. It was arguing constantly and I guess, umm, I felt least in love when I started to feel sort of desensitised to it. I started to feel numb towards the things they were saying, I was used to it, so (original sample).

Ruby explained that the arguments were occurring often and that she became 'numb' to the insults. This is not to say that she was not negatively affected by these insults, but that the behaviours occurred so frequently they became a routine aspect of the relationship.

Belittling was another theme brought up by participants in terms of insults from a partner and Heidi spoke a lot about feeling demeaned by her current partner.

Heidi: He often does it front of our friends, which is just, it's really awkward...and everybody else notices it... They say I can't believe he said that to you, umm, you know, just stupid things, like really getting angry at me for adding up a pub quiz wrong. Umm, nobody is going to die if you add up a pub quiz wrong [in a mocking voice]... But he acted like it was the end of the world, like I was the stupidest person on the planet. Umm, and if he did that *tomorrow*, that would not be tolerated now (original sample).

Heidi also talked about another specific incident where he got angry at her:

Heidi: But, he, as I said, he tends to fly off the handle about really stupid things, so, umm, one time when I was coming back from work, umm, late, I got back to his flat at I'd say 10 o'clock and I had forgotten to buy him cough sweets, umm, because he had a cold. He's *always* ill. And he said that I was a constant disappointment to him... and now I'd be much more willing to challenge that, but at the time, I just didn't really say anything (original sample).

As Heidi said that her partner was always ill this suggested that she does not consider this as a serious issue. In both passages, Heidi also talked about how when these events occurred, she did not resist. However, Heidi suggested that she now feels stronger and more able to resist her partner.

These participants stated that insulting and belittling behaviours affected them negatively by making them feel bad; stupid; disrespected; and unloved. These participants also talked about how these behaviours occurred throughout their relationships. This shows the difference between receiving insults in the context of an abusive relationship and disagreements that happen in many relationships. Sarah gave a good explanation of this:

Sarah: I think in most relationships when you have an argument people say things that they don't necessarily mean and they say it out of anger. So other things have been said in other relationships, but I wouldn't necessarily call that a bad relationship just because we had an upset once. But in the first relationship... the negative one, it happened quite a lot (original sample).

Sarah sheds light on the fact that insults do not necessarily mean a relationship is abusive, but that abuse can include insulting and belittling behaviour.

Insults were not mentioned as much by participants sampled from the COHSAR study. In the 18-24-year-old age group, both Hazel and Anthony talked about insults they received from their partners within their abusive relationships:

Hazel: She would just completely fly off the handle with me... very verbally aggressive (COHSAR 18-24).

Anthony: It was getting worse all the time, the arguments would last longer... more hurtful things said (COHSAR 18-24).

In the 30-34-year-old age group, Amy said that the worst abuse she suffered from her partner was 'in a verbal assault' and that this was a result of her partner's drinking:

Amy: Alcohol use and... sometimes the things she would say as a result of that. But then it was really hard because some of the things she'd say would be very, very cutting. Very sharp, quite nasty, vicious, and the next day she wouldn't remember anything about it (COHSAR 30-34).

She believed that this abuse was intended to lower her self-esteem, like Heidi's perceptions. These participants, like those in the original sample, showed that insults can be used as a form of control and be a part of a pattern of abusive behaviour. Stark (2010: 202) has argued that elements of control, such as insults, are present in a lot of relationships, but to establish whether abuse is occurring, we need to look at the 'meaning' of these behaviours in relation to what else is going on within a relationship. Insults are commonplace in the relationships of participants sampled, both in and out of the context of a coercive controlling relationship.

Experiences of Physical Violence

Although emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse reported, four participants in the original sample (Alison, Sarah, Ruby and Annie) also experienced physical abuse. Alison said that her abusive partner hit her on one occasion towards the end of their relationship.

Alison: I think he, we were kind of like at the end and he was really angry at me and he just, kind of, yeah, he just hit me... He was kind of joking around and then hit me across the face twice, and then made it out to be, like [in a mocking voice] oh it's not that serious, but it really hurt obviously (original sample).

Her partner tried to minimise his actions, despite hitting her across the face twice. Alison suggested that he was joking around at first, but also said that he was angry, which implies that her partner hit her out of anger more than anything else. Alison said that it hurt her when he hit her, so perhaps Alison's partner attempted to play down the incident as he realised the seriousness of his actions. This could also be a way of

making Alison feel as though she was overreacting. Sarah also said that her abusive partner became physically abusive once, by restraining her.

Sarah: I wanted to leave the house and he didn't want me to leave the house and so he pinned me up against the front door and told me I couldn't leave (original sample).

Although both Alison and Sarah said that their partners were only physically abusive once, when we look at the physical abuse alongside the other forms of abuse experienced within their relationships, we can see violent acts were used by perpetrators, alongside emotional abuse, as part of an ongoing pattern of abuse. If we were to look at these episodes of physical abuse as one-off events, the true extent of the abuse they experienced would remain hidden (Stark, 2010). Ruby and Annie, however, experienced physical abuse throughout their relationships. As mentioned above, Ruby said that her partner scared her when he hit her once. However, when probed later in the interview, Ruby mentioned that this was not the first time that he had been physically violent.

Ruby: One time angrily, it was serious, you know. He used to shake me, you know, but in some ways, you know, it was never something that properly frightened me, until the one time and he just turned round and he just punched me in the arm and I was like, no, in shock, because, I, I, wasn't expecting it to happen, I think that was the only time he *properly* turned, yeah (original sample).

Although Ruby clearly stated that her abusive partner used to 'shake' her, she said that she was never really afraid of him when he did this and that she was only afraid when he hit her and 'he properly turned'. This suggests that she did not consider shaking as being as serious as being hit. Ruby initially started to say that she may have somehow provoked him, but then quickly retracted this statement, suggesting that Ruby does acknowledge that she was not to blame for his physical violence. Some previous studies that look at violence in relationships have found that women often blame

themselves for the violence inflicted upon them by their male partners (Towns and Adams, 2000; Jackson, 2001; Wood, 2001; Kearney, 2001; Chung, 2007; Toscano, 2014). However, the physical violence led Ruby to end the relationship which strongly indicates she realised at the time of the incident that her partner was to blame. Annie, on the other hand, experienced a range of physically abusive behaviours. At the beginning of the interview, Annie said that her abusive partner did not hit her but was physically abusive in other ways.

Annie: Sometimes he would be a bit more physically threatening as well. Not really outright hitting or anything, but just being very forceful or just grabbing wrist... So yeah [laughing], just a horrible person (original sample).

The use of the word 'just' here seems to imply that Annie did not consider him being forceful or grabbing her wrist as serious or that she was attempting to play down the seriousness of the physical violence. Later in the interview, when asked about her experiences of physical abuse specifically, Annie did talk more in-depth about the physically abusive behaviours that she had experienced.

Annie: I can remember he pulled my hair, umm, there was a lot of shouting and a lot of shouting in my face, in a really kind of aggressive way, where it felt like, I used to flinch a lot because I thought that he was going to hit me (original sample).

In the above extract, Annie recognises the seriousness of the physical violence. In fact, Annie revealed that she used to find his aggressive behaviour frightening, as she worried he would physically assault her when he was shouting. Stark (2007) argued that perpetrators of coercive control use this fear of violence to ensure their victims remain compliant. If Annie felt that physical violence was likely, she would be more inclined to go along with her abusive partner's wishes because she was scared that she would be physically harmed otherwise, and this fear would be based on her partner's previous physically violent behaviour. When probed further, by me asking her whether

he could have hit her anywhere other than the face, Annie went on to reveal the full seriousness of her partner's physically abusive behaviour.

Annie: He did actually, now I can remember, he did strangle me a few times (original sample).

Annie repeated three times that she could not remember if her partner had hit her, whilst revealing that she had been restrained, grabbed, had her hair pulled and been strangled. This repetition of saying that she had not been hit suggests that she sees this as a more serious form of physical abuse compared to the acts she recollected, reinforced by her saying that she felt afraid that he was going to hit her. This is despite having been strangled more than once. As mentioned in the previous chapter, domestic violence is still seen as synonymous with physical violence (Stark, 2007) and perhaps, more specifically, being hit by a partner. Annie also had to be probed for her to reveal that she had been strangled by her abusive partner. This could be because she had genuinely forgotten, as she did not consider this form of abuse to be as bad as being hit, or even abusive behaviour at all, or because remembering painful memories could have been too much for her. This is similar to Ruby who experienced other forms of physical violence before being hit by her abusive partner. It could be that some forms of physical violence are considered more serious or seen as more abusive than other forms of physical violence. Bowen et al. (2013) and McCarry and Lombard (2016) found that their participants only considered certain abusive behaviours to be abusive under certain conditions and saw some of these behaviours as worse than others and therefore were more likely to identify these behaviours as abusive.

Nine participants in the COHSAR sample reported experiencing physical violence. Most of these participants were female – seven females and three males experienced physical abuse in the COHSAR sample. In the youngest age group, Anthony, Barbara and Hazel also reported physical violence in their previous relationships. Anthony explained that the physical violence he received also led to the end of the relationship:

Anthony: And then he started pushing me across the room when we were having arguments, and then um hit me, and then I hit him, and then we had arguments where we threw things at each other... and I thought no. no more (COHSAR 18-24).

Anthony does state that he was also physically violent in response and rather than one incident of physical violence, it was after a prolonged time where arguments became more explosive and physical. Barbara explained that sometimes playfights with her ex-partner would get out of hand:

Barbara: It would change from being fun to like, completely real, and she would lash out and stuff... and when she'd been drunk and stuff she sort of like, shoved us, and hit like (COHSAR 18-24).

Hazel's ex-partner also became physically abusive when intoxicated:

Hazel: He broke my nose one night em, and I went back to the flat the next day and he was like 'who the *hell* has done that to you?' (COHSAR 18-24).

Her partner could not remember injuring Hazel the night before. Alcohol seemed to be more of an issue for participants in the COHSAR sample; alcohol was rarely mentioned by participants in the original sample.

In the 25-29-year-old age group, Arlene, Valerie and Jake were physically victimised. Both Arlene and Valerie explained that although their ex-partners did not hit them, they did have objects thrown at them.

Arlene: He used to throw things at me, only like pens and stuff (COHSAR 25-29).

Valerie: We used to have massive, massive, it was like throwing crockery around rows once a month (COHSAR 25-29).

As mentioned previously, this throwing of objects used to leave Arlene afraid. However, in Valerie's case, the throwing of objects was mutual and more akin to situational couple violence (Johnson, 2006: 1003). Jake, on the other hand, said his ex-girlfriend was physically violent towards him.

Jake: She hit me a couple of times, but it's not abuse because, I mean she was only five foot two, five foot three... she must have felt angry enough to have hit me, it's not

abuse... if I'd hit her it would be abuse because y'know, I'm big enough and strong enough to do her some serious harm. Erm if she hits me it's not a big deal, y'now I can stand up for myself. So it's not, I wouldn't say it's abusive, no (COHSAR 25-29).

Jake's comments suggest that he did not consider this physical violence to be abuse. This could be a gendered issue akin to the findings by others that suggest females are more likely to be negatively impacted by abusive behaviours (Barter et al., 2009; Barter et al., 2015).

In the 30-34-year-old age group, Amy, Bruce and Sarah reported physical violence. Amy explained that her ex-partner was physically violent towards her when intoxicated:

Amy: Again she was drunk and it was Christmas Day... and she did actually start being physically violent towards me (COHSAR 30-34).

Amy then went on to explain that this physical violence led to the end of the relationship, which will be looked at in more detail later in a later section. However, as Amy has also explained that she had experienced emotional violence from this partner, this suggests that Amy saw this physical violence as the final straw; that violence has now got so severe she needed to end the relationship.

Bruce reported a lot of physical abuse in his previous relationship and he said that this was 'the worst aspect' of this relationship. This physical violence was ongoing and severe. Bruce detailed one occasion where the police were involved:

Bruce: I was trying to get away in my car and he'd... managed to get in through the window and pulled my key out and it snapped... and he was just laying into me and he was trying to get me out of the car and I was absolutely scared to death and these two police officers came in a vehicle... and I asked them to help me... They didn't do anything, they just literally said 'get inside, get inside or we'll do you for causing an affray.' (COHSAR 30-34).

He then went on to explain an occasion where he was punched by his ex-partner and a witness took him to a police station:

Bruce: And he took me to the police station and they just said 'what happened?' and I told them what happened and they said 'oh well what do you want us to do?' (COHSAR 30-34).

The police did not offer to help Bruce, even though there was physical evidence that Bruce had been assaulted. Bruce explained that this may have been because of 'institutionalised homophobia' within the police force, or because of the dominant narrative that women are usually victimised in abusive relationships.

Sarah also explained that she was victimised physically throughout her relationship with her ex-partner. She recounted two occasions when her ex-partner physically abused her.

Sarah: And so I walked out and that's when she kicked me down the stairs (COHSAR 30-34).

Sarah: She just got in the car and central locked it and she started driving around. And she just randomly punched me, she'd be driving and just go [makes sound of punch]... and then she drove for a brick wall and at the last minute she swerved (COHSAR 30-34).

The second occasion was when Sarah tried to leave her partner – again showing that violence can often escalate when attempting to end an abusive relationship.

Physical abuse was experienced by a minority of participants and not all of those with experience of abusive relationships had been physically victimised. This underlines Stark's (2007) assertion that we need to look at other forms of abuse alongside physical violence to pinpoint and understand the workings of a coercive controlling relationship. Nonetheless, some of these experiences of physical abuse experienced by participants were also severe and part of an ongoing pattern of abuse, which Stark explains constitutes coercive control (2007); physical abuse can be used to further coerce and control victims through fear of violence.

Experiences of Sexual Pressure and Sexual Violence

As well as emotional and physical abuse, sexual abuse and pressure was also experienced by participants in this study. Sexual violence and/or pressure was experienced by five participants in the original sample. Two of these participants did not define their relationships as abusive. Along with the photographs that Ruby talked about previously, Ruby also spoke about how her partner would try to get her to engage in sexual activity.

Ruby: We never slept with each other. Umm, he tried and tried and tried, umm, a few things and I felt, like, uncomfortable and I said I didn't want to, umm, so I sort of like pushed him off, but it was nothing like forced (original sample).

Although Ruby's partner attempted to engage her in sexual activity, Ruby never entered into a sexual relationship with him. While her partner was unsuccessful in his attempts, his actions still made her uneasy and Ruby said that she did have to use physical force against him on some occasions. Ruby managed to successfully resist his behaviour despite this. Throughout Ruby's interview, Ruby talked about ways in which she actively tried to resist her abusive male partner's behaviour. We have seen that she tried to resist the backlash she received in response to her photographs being shared around her school, how she ended her relationship when her partner hit her and how she was able to resist the sexual pressure inflicted upon her. As outlined earlier, Hester (1992) argued that male control is a response to female resistance and Stark (2007) proposed that women resist abusive and controlling behaviours in a variety of ways, often personal to the woman, but the problem is that abusive men often find ways to counteract this. Ruby's answers showed that she was not a passive victim throughout her abusive relationship, but that her abusive partner used an array of abusive and manipulative behaviours to try to get what he wanted.

Alison said that she experienced unwanted sexual touching and pressure from her abusive partner.

Alison: It wasn't ever rape, but it was a lot of pressure and just a lot, like, all the time, and no sort of, kind of, umm, respect for my own desires or anything like that. And because I was young, I kind of thought that maybe this is what I should be doing, it was just really bad yeah. Unhealthy (original sample).

Alison explained here that she was not raped by her abusive partner, but she was pressured into sexual activity regularly and her partner did not take her wants and needs into consideration. At the time, Alison believed that this was normal sexual behaviour, but she now considers this to be 'unhealthy'. This again is evidence that female sexuality is seen as coming second to male sexuality (Hester, 1992) and female sexual needs are seen as second to male sexual needs (Mackinnon, 1989; Holland et al., 1998). Alison's own experiences of sexual pressure informed her belief that sexual violence is common in the relationships of young adults, which was explored in the previous chapter. Alison was apprehensive about labelling experiences of being pressured into sexual activity as force, possibly because of the connotations this word has. However, from what Alison said about feeling like she 'should be' engaging in certain sexual activity, it suggests that Alison experienced this pressure as force, again highlighting the blurred line between pressure and force. Although Alison explained that he did not physically make her do anything, she still felt as though she had to, which is coercion. Just because a woman *does* have sex with a man, without there being any kind of force, it does not mean that the sex was entirely consensual or wanted (Mackinnon, 1989; Walker 1997; Morgan et al., 2006; Burkett, 2010). Burkett (2010) asserted that young women in her study had sex with partners despite not wanting to and that female sexual autonomy does not occur inside of a vacuum; there are constraints on all sexual decisions that women make, which come from pressure to conform to gendered norms surrounding female sexuality.

When asked if she had ever been forced into doing anything sexual that she did not want to do, Annie said she had.

Annie: Yes and this relationship is the only relationship that I experienced that in. And that occurred a lot throughout it (original sample).

As well as unwanted sexual touching, Annie talked about how sexual pressure was present throughout her relationship, but she did not consider this to be abusive until a few years after the relationship had ended, when she realised his behaviour was sexually disrespectful, which is not uncommon in relation to previous literature (Jackson, 2001; Towns and Scott, 2013). Annie said that her partner would use emotional pressure to make her have sex with him or she would have sex with him because he was relentless with his pressurising. When asked if she had ever had a partner refuse to use protection during sex, Annie replied that her partner had pressured her into not using protection.

Annie: I remember being kind of pressured into that. So it was not like a refusal, but I was kind of talked into it over a period of time. And I remember having to get the morning after pill quite a lot, feeling really kind of upset and annoyed about him (original sample).

Annie believed that her partner's behaviour was due to him wanting to own her.

Annie: I don't know... I don't know if it was just because... the kind of ownership thing, or wanting to get me pregnant so that I would *not be able to leave him*. But that's... Yeah, I don't really buy into the whole not using contraception because it feels better. I don't really think that that was it. So I think it was probably something a bit more sinister than that (original sample).

Annie thought that her partner may have wanted to get her pregnant as a strategy to keep her in the abusive relationship. Towns and Scott (2013) used the term 'ownership' to mean 'possessive, jealous and/or controlling practices' used by male partners in young women's heterosexual relationships. Annie's own use of the word 'ownership' when explaining her partner's sexually abusive behaviour maps perfectly on to this definition. It shows how her abusive partner would pressure Annie into not using contraception as another way of controlling her behaviour, as Annie said, to prevent her from being able to end the relationship.

While both Megan and Kate stated that they had never been in abusive relationships, both said they felt sexual pressure at times. Megan said that she felt pressure at the beginning of her current relationship to take part in sexual activity that she was not comfortable with.

Megan: Well, I, I felt pressured because things were mentioned that I was like, aww, not really my thing, but as soon as I made it clear that it wasn't my thing, he was really like OK, then it's not my thing (original sample).

However, Megan said that when she told her partner about her discomfort, he did not push the subject. Despite this, Megan said it made her feel boring at the time.

Megan: It made me feel like I should be I should be a lot more adventurous for my age. And like maybe, aww, maybe all young people do all these things, but like... I don't know. It made me a bit paranoid that I was having, like I was a bit vanilla [quietly] (original sample).

Although Megan's partner stopped pressuring her once she had made her feelings clear, Megan's statement above shows that she did still *feel* sexual pressure. This suggests that outside influences through social norms regarding sexuality may also be evident. Kate also talked about a time when she felt pressure to engage in sexual activity although she did not want to.

Kate: Umm, there was when time that I thought that I'd best had and that sounds awful [laughing]. But afterwards when I said that I wasn't really into it that time, he was really distraught. So I think we then came on the right grounds then because I just expected that, oh it can't be that bad, but yeah (original sample).

Unlike Megan, Kate engaged in sexual activity even though she did not want to, but like Megan, Kate also told her partner that she was not comfortable, albeit afterwards. Kate also said that her partner was upset once she told him that she did not like it, suggesting that he had not meant to pressure Kate into having sex, and again, this pressure may have been external to the individual relationship. The responses of both Megan and Kate's partners when they were informed that they did not want to engage in certain sexual behaviours is marked when looked at in the context of Mackinnon's (1989) assertion that men are all too often unaware of how their sexual behaviours are experienced by women and that males are socialised into ignoring female wants. The fact that their partners reacted in the way that they did shows that they had no idea that some forms of sexual activity were abhorrent to Megan and Kate. Megan and Kate's experiences also show that sexual pressure is not only normalised within abusive relationships but is normalised within heterosexual relationships more generally; that females are expected to pander to the sexual wants of their male partners, whilst neglecting what they want (Mackinnon, 1989; Walker, 1997; Holland et al., 1998; Morgan et al., 2006; Burkett, 2010). Although Kate and Megan were not in abusive relationships and although their partners did not continue to exert pressure, the fact that they experienced pressure shows that sexual pressure is common.

Sexual violence and/or pressure was also experienced by participants in the COHSAR study. Two participants in the 18-24-year-old age range said that they had experienced sexual violence in their previous relationships. Anthony explained that the sexual violence that he received led to the end of his relationship.

Anthony: He sort of pinned me down, and I said 'stop,' and he didn't, and that was the pivotal point, and that was it, it was *no more*. And er, that was the end of that, really (COHSAR 18-24).

When he was asked if he considered this experience to be rape, he said:

Anthony: I would now. I hate, I *hate* saying though (COHSAR 18-24).

He said this was because:

Anthony: It makes it a lot more real, saying that (COHSAR 18-24).

From what Anthony said, we can infer that he did not consider this experience to be rape until later, after the relationship had ended. However, the fact that this experience resulted in the end of the relationship shows that he did not consider this to be normal or desirable behaviour within a relationship.

As noted in the previous chapter, Meg also experienced sexual violence; however, she did not consider this behaviour to be a part of a domestic violence or domestic abuse relationship, despite being in a relationship with the perpetrator. Meg did not want to detail her experience, but it did negatively affect her.

Meg: He damaged me (COHSAR 18-24).

As Meg was negatively impacted by this behaviour, it should be considered as abusive behaviour.

Meg's lack of recognition of sexual violence as being part of a domestic violence relationship, as well as the general silence fits with the view that sexually abusive behaviours, including sexual pressure, are not considered to be a form of abuse. From Anthony and Meg's answers we can see that they do not consider sexual violence to be a normal relationship behaviour. Nevertheless, they are reluctant to label the

behaviour. This, again, fits with Stark's (2007) theory that victims of abuse do not want the label of victim, and so therefore are hesitant to label their experiences as abuse.

Lynn, in the 25-29-year-old age group said that sometimes she would feel pressure to engage in sexual activity with her ex-partner.

Lynn: I wasn't aware at the time, I could actually say 'no' to her. I mean it wasn't like I was raped or anything but it was (pause) I wasn't aware enough to be able to say, 'I'm not entirely comfortable (COHSAR 25-29).

Sexual abuse was experienced mainly by females in this current study. This therefore supports findings from other studies that sexual violence, including pressure, is a gendered issue and younger females are likely to experience this form of abuse (Foshee, 1996; Jackson, 1999; Hird, 2000; Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2011; Hamby and Turner, 2012; Fox et al., 2013).

Participants' Ideas Surrounding Why Abuse Occurred

Some participants in this study who had experienced abusive relationships provided explanations of why they thought the abuse occurred. In the original sample, Annie thought that her partner's abusive behaviour may have been based on his insecurities.

Annie: Umm, maybe he was insecure. I know he used to talk a lot about his ex-girlfriend who was someone that I never knew. But he used to talk about her a lot in a very negative way, which made me feel uncomfortable. I think maybe at the time it made me feel like, oh this guy really likes me because I am better than this one... He told me that she cheated on him numerous times with different people and maybe he had some insecurities related to that and that's why he behaved the way he did, like the looking at my phone, looking at who I was texting other men or anything. I think that maybe that was it, but I don't really think that excuses it (original sample).

Her abusive partner had experienced infidelity in his previous relationship and Annie thought that this might have been the reason for him being controlling in her relationship with him. This could be partly the case, as insecurity and low self-esteem have been found to be linked to violent behaviour (Sutherland and Shepherd, 2002). However, Annie did stress that she does not think that this insecurity justifies his behaviour, showing that Annie does not blame herself for his abusive behaviour. Annie said that her partner would talk about his previous partner negatively, but at the time Annie felt that this was a positive thing as it reinforced his feelings for her, but at the time of the interview, Annie considered this to be a 'warning sign'; something that could have alerted her to her partner's misogyny had she have been more aware at the time. Links have also been found between those young men who had misogynistic views and men who display abusive behaviours towards their girlfriends (Capaldi et al., 2001), but Murnen et al (2003) found that this alone is unlikely to trigger male aggression.

Ruby talked about her abusive partner's behaviour as being because he did not know what he wanted from their relationship.

Ruby: I think, I think because I was so, umm, so much older for my age at the time... but I don't think that they wanted to be the kind of person in a relationship for the age group that we were in and I just don't think they wanted that attachment, so it made it easier for them to have me as and when they wanted me, so, when something went wrong, they had me there, whereas the rest of the time, they'd ignore me, so it made it easier for them I guess, more convenient (original sample).

She believed that her abusive partner's age may have been the reason for why he treated her as he did. Ruby felt that she acted older than she was, and her partner was not ready for that kind of relationship commitment. Although Ruby did not seem to be blaming herself, there was an element of justification of her abusive partner's

behaviour as she suggested that his actions were a result of his confusion over the relationship. Alison said that she also used to make excuses for her abusive partner and that this was because of abuse he had suffered.

Alison: Umm, because he, he was abused as a child, so, I, it was this kind of thing of it's not his fault that he's this way (original sample).

Alison's reasons for why the abuse occurred at the time of the relationship had the effect of removing all blame from her partner. A range of studies have found a link between victimised as a child and perpetrating abuse in later life (Wolfe et al., 2005; Weinehall, 2005; Sears et al., 2007; Taket et al., 2010; Gadd, et al., 2013; Temple et al., 2013). However, most young people who experience abuse do not go on to be perpetrators (Taket et al., 2010), so this cannot fully explain Alison's partner's behaviour. Alison did not excuse his behaviour at the time of the interview. Perhaps this was because Alison previously did not want the relationship to end or she wanted to justify remaining in the relationship with her partner, so she wanted to believe that he was not really like that and that this behaviour was not his fault, which was also found by Towns and Adams (2000), Wood (2001) and Enander (2011). But once the relationship ended, Alison could see that this was not the case. Heidi talked about her current partner's behaviour as resulting from him being stressed at work.

Heidi: It's been difficult for him at work quite a lot and, umm, he's been very stressed and he's actually been very, very rude to me on several occasions (original sample).

Later in the interview, when she described being afraid of her partner, Heidi said that she thought he does not have control over his behaviour.

Heidi: I'm... not entirely sure how much control he has over his temper, umm, because obviously hitting your computer isn't going to achieve anything...which makes me think it is more of a rage thing than a solution thing (original sample).

By focusing on how stressed her partner was due to work and his lack of control over his temper, as it is 'irrational' suggests that Heidi does not consider his temper to be his fault. She may have been trying to justify his behaviour, thereby removing blame through perceiving it as out of his 'rational' control. Similar to Alison's redirection of blame away from her partner, Heidi was still with her partner at the time of the interview and so perhaps the reason why she excused her partner's behaviour was to justify why she was remaining in this relationship. In the same way Heidi was reluctant to define her relationship as abusive, as discussed in the previous chapter, this prevented Heidi from labelling her partner as an abuser and therefore herself as a victim. Stark (2007) has argued this is common amongst female victims of coercive control and Jackson (2001) and Chung (2007) also found this to be the case amongst their female participants. Justification of abusive partners' behaviour came across in a few of these participants' ideas surrounding why they believed their partners were abusive and was also present in the COHSAR sample.

In the COHSAR sample, five female participants made justifications for their ex-partners abusive behaviour – the majority of these were in the 25-29 and 30-34-year-old age groups. In the youngest age group, Hazel felt that her ex-partner was abusive because of a combination of his substance misuse and poor mental health.

Hazel: But even now I like talking about him... I catch myself making excuses for him you know, he was ill, he was mentally ill, he was on drugs, he was doing this, he was doing that (COHSAR 18-24).

Hazel's comments suggest that even though she knows she should not make excuses for her ex-partner, she can't help it. Enander (2011) has previously found that female abuse victims often believed that their partners were loving, even when they were being abusive; when abuse became more common in the relationship, then victims came to the realisation that their partners could not be good. Hazel's relationship with

this partner ended abruptly – as her partner was sectioned for mental health reasons. Perhaps this could partly explain why Hazel still cannot help to make excuses for ex-partner. Although she had been thinking of ending the relationship, she did not get the same closure as she may have if she had been the one to end the relationship.

Similarly, Arlene and Karen in the 25-29-year old age group both thought that their ex-partners life-problems were the cause of their abusive behaviour.

Arlene: I think a lot of the catalyst was more like problems that he had which were beyond his control, and perhaps that impact on his mental health and erm, and obviously then on our relationship on a bigger scale (COHSAR 25-29).

In the same way, Karen talks about how her ex-partners problems made her feel that her ex-partner was not responsible for his actions.

Karen: I kind of used to try and justify ‘oh well he’s had a bad time’ and I would let him get away with things that you wouldn’t normally let somebody, somebody, somebody treat you like that (COHSAR 25-29).

In the 30-34-year-old age range, Amy and Sarah both thought the root of their ex-partners’ abusive behaviour was their alcohol and/or drugs misuse.

Amy: But this behaviour only came out when she’d had a drink, but my stance was always, ‘well, alcohol is a disinhibiter, it shows the true person that you really are (COHSAR 30-34).

Sarah: She was really, really funny, lovely person at times. But I think she just got overtaken by the other, other half of her. And it probably was all down to drugs, looking back at it (COHSAR 30-34).

The difference between Amy and Sarah seems to be that where Amy thought that her ex-partner’s behaviour was *magnified* by her intoxication, Sarah seemed to suggest that inebriation was the *cause* of the abuse. Justification of abuse has been found in other studies too (Toscano, 2001; Wood, 2001; Chung, 2007).

Self-blame for abuse is another reoccurring theme within the literature (Kearney, 2001; Wood, 2001; Chung, 2007). None of the participants in the original sample

blamed themselves for abuse that they suffered, but some participants in the COHSAR sample did suggest that they blamed themselves.

Hazel - in the 18-24-year-old and Emma - in the 30-34-year old and age range, seemed to blame themselves for not challenging their abusive partners' behaviour.

Hazel: I felt guilty that I'd not noticed it earlier, that um, I'd not done anything to stop it, if I'd spoken to somebody about it before would he have got this bad (COHSAR 18-24).

Hazel blamed herself for not talking to others about her ex's mental health problems. She thought that if she had spoken out about his erratic behaviour, then her ex-partner's behaviour would not have continued.

Emma: I would still say it was my choice not to so it, it is my fault then that I didn't choose to go with that (COHSAR 30-34).

Emma is saying that it was her choice to stay in the abusive relationship, so it was her fault.

However, most participants did not suggest that they blamed themselves for the relationship abuse. This may be because most of the participants had left their abusive relationships, so feelings of accountability were not present. However, changes in the balance of power in Heidi's relationship had also caused conflict.

Heidi: I think the power dynamics have changed a little bit. Umm, because I am doing a PhD now and I feel much more able to, to express my opinions and my views in a confident way. So that's been a bit difficult (original sample).

Although not blaming herself, Heidi suggested that changes in her life and her increase in confidence had caused problems. As Hester (1992) and Stark (2007) have argued, perpetrators of coercive control respond to increased female equality and power by using abusive behaviours towards their partners. Heidi's partner's behaviour could similarly be a bid to claw back more power in the relationship.

Ending the Abusive Relationship

Participants in both samples discussed the end of their abusive relationships. As discussed earlier, Annie – in the original sample - had been afraid of ending her relationship with her abusive partner, but she did talk about when she finally ended the relationship.

Annie: Umm, so in my head it ended way sooner than it did, when it actually ended. Because I tried to break up with him so many times...So I was trying to end it on one of the times, I went, kind of went out with another man because to me it was over, but to him obviously it wasn't. Umm, he kept kind of interrupting my life in London where I was trying to make new friends and do these things, but he would come to social situations with my new friends or like parties and then sitting in the room being really miserable and just made me feel really uncomfortable like I couldn't do that. And I think it was just a series of those kind of things that just made me not want to be with him anymore (original sample).

Annie talked about how she tried to end the relationship on many occasions, but it was a 'series' of events that led to her finally ending the relationship.

Ruby ended the relationship with her abusive partner when he hit her.

Ruby: I think by that point I thought, you know, it's been verbal, you know, humiliation through school, I, I've put myself through all this and now he's done this and it was sort of like a final straw, I just thought I'm, I'm not trapped in this relationship and I'm not going to be (original sample).

Ruby talked about him hitting her as the 'final straw', which is a term also used by Hester et al. (2007: 33) to denote a specific incident which leads victims to a realisation that an end to the relationship is necessary. Again, this suggests that for Ruby this was just one event in a series that led to the end of the relationship. There were similarities in Alison's account.

Alison: I think it was the moment when he had treated me so badly that I couldn't, I couldn't, carry on really. Because I would have lost respect for myself (original sample).

This suggests that after the abuse Alison had suffered throughout the relationship, she came to a realisation that his treatment of her was wrong and she could not stay in that relationship anymore.

Similarly, COHSAR participants also talked about a series of events with cumulated into physical violence had caused them to end their relationship. The end of Hazel's relationship came quite abruptly when her partner was sectioned under the mental health act. However, she said that she had wanted to end the relationship prior to this when her ex-partner was physically violent towards her in public.

Hazel: I think after he did it in public that time, that was, that was when people actually sat up and said 'what the hell's going on?' (COHSAR 18-24).

Hazel suggests that it was other people's questioning that made Hazel come to the realisation that what had been happening to her was not 'normal'. Amy also stated that the final straw was when her ex-partner was physically violent towards her.

Amy: One of the turning points was, that had happened on holiday. That was the summer, and then I think I thought 'right, well, I'll wait till the end of the year, or see where we're at the end of the year.' And then it got to Christmas and she kicked off (COHSAR 30-34).

From what Amy has said, it suggests that she gave her ex-partner a chance to reform, but the physical violence caused her to end the relationship. Physical abuse was a common reason to end the relationship, even if participants had experienced other

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forms of abuse prior to this. This could be considered more evidence that physical violence is taken more seriously than other forms of abuse. Other participants in the COHSAR sample talked about how they had tried to end their abusive relationships on multiple occasions. Maxine had tried to split up with her partner a number of times but her partner would not accept it.

Maxine: I had to leave the country to get away from him cause he just wouldn't give up. Yeah I mean I was planning to go away anyway but I told him I was only going for a fortnight: I was gone for 6 months (COHSAR 18-24).

Likewise, the end of Karen's relationship ended when she left the country. But for Karen, this was because she was afraid of what would happen when she ended it.

Karen: I didn't want to see it.... Cause I knew how upset he was going to be and I knew how he would be. He used to drink a lot and he basically just went out and got, spent like three days solid drunk and I didn't want to see that...it was probably *really* cowardly way of doing it but I was sort scared of his reaction (COHSAR 25-29).

Previous experience had taught Karen what to expect, so she felt she had to be far away from him to end her relationship.

Robert, in the original sample, talked about a series of events leading to the end of his relationship, but in a different way.

Robert: Because I couldn't deal with it anymore so I just told her listen I can't, you have too much problems for me, I can't be here for you all the time, I can't deal with that (original sample).

It has already been discussed how Robert felt that his partner suffered from a range of mental health problems and would often threaten to harm herself to keep Robert close to her. This suggests that he ended the relationship due to the cumulative effect that this had on him, until it got to the point where he felt that the relationship could not continue.

When Sarah, in the original sample, was asked why her abusive relationship ended, she was a lot more specific.

Sarah: Because he got another girl pregnant! (original sample).

Prior to this Sarah did experience prolonged emotional abuse and some physical abusive from her partner, suggesting that him cheating on her and getting another girl pregnant was the final straw for her.

Infidelity was a common contributor to the end of participants relationships in the COHSAR sample, particularly in the younger age ranges.

Barbara: Um, we went on a night... and she ended up getting with one of me team mates, in front of us, so, it was a bit, off (COHSAR 18-24).

Barbara went on to explain that things between her and her ex-partner had improved up until then, so the infidelity had 'shocked' her. Russell also ended his relationship because of his ex-partner's infidelity.

Russell: text him, I said 'that's it,' I said 'I don't even wanna know you anymore.'
(COHSAR 18-24).

He ended the relationship straight away as soon as he found out that his ex-partner had been unfaithful.

Jeb: Um it ended, it ended itself in a quite spectacular fashion...I came home from university and found him in bed with my best friend! (COHSAR 25-29).

Jeb said the relationship then could not continue as the trust had gone. Valerie talked about her ex-partners infidelity as being a contributory factor.

Valerie: It was the lies. If she'd come back from, she could have if she'd been clever enough, come back from Blackpool and said 'look Valerie I'm really sorry I've had a one-night stand when I was drunk. Will you forgive us?' and I would have been, I'd have been *hurt* and the trust would have took a long time to rebuild but I wouldn't, we wouldn't have ended it cos people make mistakes, people are human (COHSAR 25-29).

But for Valerie, the end of the relationship came because her ex-partner had been untruthful, not the infidelity itself. Interestingly, in the COHSAR sample, infidelity seemed to be a precursor for ending a relationship, more so than abuse. Donovan and Hester (2011:83) have explained that western conceptualisations of love are based on ideas surrounding 'monogamy' and 'fidelity'. Additionally, previous studies have found that, if infidelity was present in a relationship violence was considered more acceptable (Bowen et al., 2013; Stonard et al., 2015; McCarry and Lombard, 2016). Furthermore, in Chapter 4, it was shown that infidelity was a marker of a bad relationship by participants in this study. Therefore, this could be the reason why infidelity resulted in the end of abusive relationships for some participants.

For these participants, the end of the relationship with their abusive partner came after a series of abusive events which then led to a realisation that the behaviour that they were experiencing was wrong and they could not remain in these relationships anymore. This is consistent with Enander's (2011) finding that when a partner's abusive behaviour out-weighs non-abusive behaviour, the victimised partner actively seeks to fall out of love with their abuser to end the relationship.

Even though Heidi, in the original sample, was still in her relationship with her partner at the time of the interview, she did say that she did try to break up with her partner a few times and she talked in particular about when she did end the relationship with her partner and he revealed that he had suicidal thoughts, as discussed above. However, the relationship did continue after this and Heidi said that this was because she felt responsible for him.

Heidi: I'll be honest, I think part of it was an element of responsibility that I feel towards him. Umm, I'm the kind of person that feels the need to take care of people I think, which is very unfortunate, I wouldn't choose that as a trait, umm, if I had the option to get rid of it, probably. Umm, but also, I did love him very much at one point and I felt like it wasn't the kind of thing that I wanted to just throw away. Umm, so, we decided to keep trying. And it has improved a lot, I think (original sample).

Heidi felt that she should work at her relationship, as she had been in love with him 'at one point', which is interesting and will be discussed more fully later. Heidi's answer suggests that she felt obliged to keep working on the relationship, which has been highlighted in other studies (Fraser, 2005; Baley, 2010). However, she did say that the relationship had got better since they got back together. Heidi also talked about how she has a 'need to take care of people', so felt that she needed to take care of her partner and that is why she remained in the relationship. Heidi's partner, as we have seen, used emotionally manipulative behaviour in the form of his disclosure of suicidal thoughts, which played towards Heidi's need to care for others, to keep Heidi in the relationship. Previous studies have shown how women use 'emotion work' to align themselves to feelings associated with romantic love – like caring for a partner – and how this emotion work helps to sustain abusive relationships (Towns and Adams, 2000; Chung 2005; 2007; Enander, 2011).

Age of Partner

Most of the participants in this study were in, and had been in, relationships with partners who were around the same age as them. However, in the original sample, two participants, Annie and Heidi were in relationships with men who were much older than them, and as they had both experienced abusive behaviours from these partners, it was thought important to discuss this here.

Annie's partner was five years older than her and she began her relationship with him when she was 18 years old.

Annie: Umm, so my worst relationship was when I was, it started when I was 18 and it carried on until I was nearly 20, so it was about a year and a half I spent with this person. Umm, and, I was, so when we met I was in sixth form, umm, and he was about five years older than me and he wasn't a student or anything, he was working and he'd kind of lived away for a bit with another girlfriend. It wasn't equal, I guess I would say (original sample).

Her partner was older, but also had more life experience and a more adult lifestyle than she had at the time of the relationship and this was reflected in the way he treated her in the relationship; Annie did not feel as though she was his equal in the relationship.

Heidi felt that it was important to tell me how old her partner was in her interview, without me asking for his age.

Heidi: Umm, we've been together for seven years now, so it's quite a while, umm, and he's quite a lot older than me. I should probably mention that he's seventeen years older than me (original sample).

The fact that Heidi felt that she had to mention how much older her partner was shows that Heidi considers this age gap to be an issue. Although Heidi and Annie were the only two participants in the original sample who were in relationships with men who were much older than themselves, both Heidi and Annie experienced abusive behaviours from these partners, so it was considered important enough to be included in this analysis. And, in the case of Heidi, who talked about gaining more power in her relationship, this may be a contributory factor for her abusive partner's behaviour; he, until the latter part of the relationship held all the power because he was older, but then Heidi became more powerful, leading her abusive partner to attempt to tip the balance of power in his favour using abusive tactics, which is consistent with Stark's (2007) typology of coercive control.

In the COHSAR sample, four participants in the two younger age ranges felt that the age of their partner had a negative impact on their relationships. Hazel, in the 18-24-year-old age group talked about the age difference between herself and her ex-partner.

Hazel: I was 15 and he was 19 em.... I just was completely infatuated with him. I thought he was the best thing since sliced bread. He had a motor bike he was this, he was that, he was cool...Em there was a lot of drug abuse and a lot of alcohol abuse em, and he was just really violent, very manipulative. But I was so dependent on him (COHSAR 18-24).

Hazel talked about how the age difference was a bigger issue as she was only 15 and her parents did not approve of the relationship. She also talked about how this was her first relationship.

Hazel: It was my first ever relationship and you know I didn't know any better (COHSAR 18-24).

Other studies have found that episodic violence is sometimes considered to be a normal part of relationships (Kearney, 2001; Wood, 2001; Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2011; Barter et al., 2015).

Arlene, in the 25-29-year old age group felt that her ex-partner resented her because of her age and would talk down to her because of it.

Arlene: Oh, you're just like a little girl and you don't know what you want. You can't have a mature relationship' and all that kind of thing (COHSAR 25-29).

And Lynn, also aged 25-29, also felt that her ex-partner, who was five years older than her, used her age against her.

Lynn: But I think the age and the income were used to some level and they did feel like they were there, as a power differential sort of thing, but that doesn't necessarily mean that I think that she acted on it all the time. I think that's the sort of difference and I think I definitely did feel that the whole issue, and this was partially me taking it personally, but I did feel the whole, 'You're younger, you don't know as much, you haven't got as much money.' (COHSAR 25-29).

In Lynn's relationship, the age difference resulted in her ex-partner having more power. Jeb felt that his ex-partner's age was the reason for him trying to restrict where he went and with whom.

Jeb: That was a very hard relationship. He clipped my wings, tried to discourage me from going out and meeting friends (COHSAR 25-29).

Jeb's ex-partner was ten years older than him and he hadn't 'come out' at the time of the relationship. Jeb thought these two factors were behind his controlling behaviour. In studies looking at violence in younger people's relationships, young women having a much older partner increased the likelihood of experiencing violence within relationships (Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2011).

Donovan and Hester (2014) also found that age, more specifically being significantly younger than a partner, often interacted with other factors within relationships affecting power dynamics leading to an increasing risk of abuse within same-sex relationships. The large age gap in these participants relationships may have contributed to the imbalance of power, making them more susceptible to abuse from their partners

Living Together

Only a small minority of the participants in this sample lived with their partners. In the original sample, this is reflection of the age of the participants and the fact that the majority were studying at the time of the interview. A few of the participants stated that their relationships became long-distance relationships once they started at university. However, some of the participants did talk about spending a lot of time at their partners' homes.

Annie said she did not officially live with her abusive partner, but she spent a lot of time at her abusive partner's parents' home.

Annie: So I was, when we first met I was doing my A levels, so I still lived with my parents, but I had quite a difficult relationship with my parents... So I would spend a lot of my time at his house, but he lived with his parents too. And then a few months in, I moved to London and I lived by myself, but he kind of spent every weekend there. Umm... and it felt like I couldn't really make plans on a weekend just in case he might

want to do something. So we didn't live together, but it kind of felt like I didn't have space (original sample).

When Annie moved away for university, her partner would also come to stay with her every weekend. Annie said that this made her feel restricted in what she could do and that she had no time away from him. Heidi, at the time of interview, lived with her parents.

Heidi: Well it's a bit complicated because I'm from [current city] and still, and I've always just always lived at home because it's cheaper, with my family. Umm, but we sort of lived together for a while, umm, yeah, maybe for four years I would spend a lot of time there (original sample).

However, she said that since they got back together after she left him, she had been spending less time at his house.

Heidi: I've never asked permission to do anything. Umm, and since I haven't been staying with him so much, that happens even less that I tell him what I'm doing, who I'm with, umm, just because we talk less, because we don't see each other every day (original sample).

Although Heidi now feels even less that she needs to tell her partner her plans. This fits in with Heidi's assertion that she had gained more power in her relationship. Both Annie's and Heidi's partners were older, and this could be why there was more of an expectation that they should be spending more time together, staying with or living with each other. This is less likely to be expected when both partners are younger. Staying with each other or living together gives the abusive partner greater opportunity to watch and control what their partner does, through surveillance and microregulation (Stark, 2007), and ultimately gives the abuser more power over their

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partner. By choosing to spend less time at her partner's home, Heidi is taking back this power.

Apart from Annie and Heidi, Sarah and Ruby in the original sample also had experience of living with partners. However, these participants did not experience abuse during this time.

Similarly, only a small number of participants in the COHSAR sample – four in total – lived with their abusive partners. Barbara in the 18-24-year-old age group, just mentioned that she had only with her ex-partner 'about five months' and Jeb, who was in the 25-29-year-old age group talked about living with his abusive ex-partner. but these participants did not talk about how his living arrangements impacted the abuse in their relationships.

However, in the 30-34-year-old age range, Amy and Emma talked more about their experiences of living with their abusive ex-partners.

Amy: I moved in with her and then we decided to buy somewhere together, and it was at this point of buying somewhere together, just after that this behaviour unfolded (COHSAR 30-34).

Amy is referring to her ex-partners abuse of alcohol which Amy saw as the root cause of her ex-partner's emotionally abusive behaviour. Prior to this, Amy's ex-partner had kept her alcohol abuse hidden. Once they were living together, the alcohol and emotional abuse became a problem.

Emma: I knew that it wasn't going to work but I just didn't have the confidence to say 'no.' And she ended up moving in... I just couldn't see how to stop it because I felt guilty that, you know, that she would be moving and I wouldn't be there to help her... and she was also 'well like you can't cope without me so I better come and live with you' and I kind of believed that ridiculously (COHSAR 30-34).

Emma's ex-partner used emotional abuse to move in with her. She made Emma feel guilty that she would have to move away if she did not live with Emma, but she also made Emma feel as though she could not survive without her. As stated above, when

partners in an abusive relationship live together, this gives the abuser greater opportunity to control their partner (Stark, 2007).

That most of participants in this study who had experienced abuse in their relationships did not live with their abusive partners, shows that abusers do not have to live with their partners to extend mechanisms of coercive and controlling behaviour. Perpetrators adapt their tactics in line with their victim's specific circumstances. This is what makes coercive control 'personalised' (Stark, 2007: 384).

Perpetration of Violence

Some of the participants in this study talked about their own behaviours within relationships which could be considered abusive. None of the participants said that they had perpetrated any form of sexual violence, but some participants talked about emotionally abusive and physically abusive acts that they perpetrated within their relationships and these are discussed below.

Emotionally Abusive Behaviours

Consistent with other studies (Barter et al., 2009; Barter et al., 2015), behaviours that might be considered emotionally abusive were the behaviours most often carried out by the participants in this study.

When asked if they had ever made a partner tell them what they were doing, who they were seeing or where they were going, Alison, Robert, Ruby, Sarah and Michael in the original sample all said that they had done this at some point in their relationships.

Alison said she would make her abusive partner tell her where he was going.

Alison: I think in that relationship I probably did a bit as well. I think it was kind of mutual distrust, so maybe I was a bit suspicious or jealous, yeah (original sample).

Alison talks about a 'mutual distrust' and trust was also an issue for Robert, which prompted him to question his partner about her movements

Robert: Yes, I have yeah. In the relationship before, well in the same relationship she was asking me where I was going because it was a long-distance relationship and she had already cheated on me previously... not very long after that moment when she cheated on me. It was just, I didn't really trust her anymore so, but I don't think it helped. [laughs] I don't think it is a good thing to do. It's just sometimes when you don't trust a person you're just panicking and like it's just, it just takes over you (original sample).

Here Robert was talking about a different relationship to the one that he had already described as emotionally abusive. He said that he did not trust her due to her infidelity, but Robert acknowledged that this behaviour was wrong, though he felt as though he could not help it. Ruby said she would also try to make her abusive partner give his whereabouts. When asked why, she also talked about trust.

Ruby: Probably because I was, I had no trust at all, so any thought that he was with someone else, I needed to know what was going on because he'd never tell me oh I'm with so-and-so, but he, they had a way of sort of, making me, making me aware that something was going on elsewhere but never explicitly saying it, so sort of taunting me in a way, which would build up frustration with me and I, I, would then demand to know what's going on, because I wanted to know where I stood but obviously he would never make the move and say oh I'm with someone else (original sample).

Ruby said that she did not trust her abusive partner, but this was because she believed that he used to deliberately try to make her jealous. Though Ruby's behaviour is not justifiable, looked at in context, this could be another way in which her partner would attempt to emotionally manipulate Ruby to get her to behave in a certain way.

The theme of lack of trust is continued with Sarah, who also used to try to make her abusive partner tell her his plans when he was going out.

Sarah: Because I'd known that he'd seen other people, again near the sort of end of our relationship and it made me anxious when he was going out and it made him anxious when I was going out, so we were constantly making sure we knew where the other person was (original sample).

Again, Michael experienced infidelity in his relationship with his ex-girlfriend and this made him want to check up on her.

Michael: Yes. I... well, like I said, she did cheat on me quite a lot. Well, not quite a lot, a couple of times, so I probably was a little bit paranoid and I would ask her where. Well, not all the time or anything, but just, yeah, I would ask kind of because of my paranoia. Not to be, not necessarily to be malicious, but so that she knew that I was aware because I was worried, which was probably a not very nice thing to do (original sample).

Michael stated that because his ex-girlfriend's infidelity, he wanted to check up on her. He did say that he did not do this 'all the time or anything', which suggests that this is something that occurred sporadically throughout the relationship. Michael said that there was no malice behind his attempts to find out what his ex-girlfriend was doing.

However, his comment 'so that she knew she was aware' suggests that there was an attempt at monitoring and surveillance of his ex-girlfriend, to curtail her behaviour - possibly to prevent further infidelity.

For these participants, trust in relation to infidelity was the motivating factor behind their attempts to find out exactly what their partners were up to. Stonard et al (2015) found that participants in their study would also try to track their partner's whereabouts and this was most often because there was a lack of trust and a fear of infidelity, consistent with the findings in this study. Jackson (1993) has argued that it is expected in romantic love relationships that you revolve your life around one person, the person in which you are in a relationship with, and this leaves individuals within these relationships exposed emotionally. When individuals are basing their whole lives and happiness on one specific person, it is unsurprising that insecurities and anxieties play out in relationships.

Annie, Ruby and Michael also said that they had used insults towards their partners in their relationships. Annie said that sometimes she would say things to deliberately make her partner upset.

Annie: Umm, just, you know, if someone's annoyed me or feeling in a certain way, I might say something that's hurtful and I know it's hurtful... Just because I need to get this feeling out of me and that's wrong. But I've done that before (original sample).

Annie explained why she behaved in this way.

Annie: Basically it's just when I am feeling insecure and feeling a certain way, but I don't deal with those feelings properly, by, you know, trying to distract myself and trying to pass or rationalise them, that I will say something in the heat of the moment and then instantly regret it (original sample).

Though she knew this behaviour was wrong, Annie thought it was a way of her trying to deal with her emotions. Ruby also said that she had used insults towards her current female partner.

Ruby: Actually in this relationship now, umm, when we first moved, when I first came to [current city]... basically we couldn't contact each other because she had no internet and I had no signal [laughs]... Basically we went through fresher's and it was horrendous because we'd lived with each other pretty much all through the summer, we were with each other all summer and then all of a sudden, we didn't see each other at all, and I remember saying, we had this massive argument and I was, like, you've been really selfish and I know that's something she really, really, doesn't like and I know I said it just to hit a nerve, because she wasn't considering me and she should've been. She knew I was more nervous to be leaving, because she was staying at home, she was at the uni [university] at home, so she was not taking the same step that I was and I was angry that she wasn't understanding that and supporting me, so I know I sort of said it in a way to be like, hello (original sample).

She intentionally tried to gain a reaction from her current partner because she felt that her partner was being unsupportive. Michael had revealed previously that he and his partner exchanged insults with each other, but this was not something that he seemed to take seriously. From what these participants have said, insults that were exchanged in these relationships can be considered a normal part of their relationships. As Stark (2010) argued and has already been discussed, insults can and are a part of many relationships, but we have to look at what else is going on alongside these insults to establish whether they are a part of an abuser's repertoire of control tactics. For these participants, that does not seem to be the case. Although insulting a partner may not be considered a 'healthy' relationship behaviour, it does not always constitute abuse or coercive control.

Some participants in the original sample also talked about their use of technology, particularly about their overuse of text messaging and phone calls. Ruby said that she employed this behaviour.

Ruby: We'd be midway through conversation and then it would be ten minutes after replying and it would be like waiting and then it would become an hour and I would send another text and then after three days, I would be getting really frustrated and I'd be phoning and phoning and it would be going to answer machine and then after a few days after that I'd give up and it would go back to normal (original sample).

Her partner would become non-responsive during text message conversations, which would lead to Ruby becoming insecure and sending multiple text messages and phoning him repeatedly. Elsewhere in the interview, Ruby said that this was happening throughout the relationship, so there was a cycle of her partner ignoring her, Ruby becoming frustrated and sending many text messages and making calls, then her partner would eventually regain contact, before the cycle began again. Although Ruby's over-use of phone calls and text messaging cannot be entirely justified, it can be seen as legitimate response to her partner's intentional emotional manipulation. Looked at in context, Ruby's insecurity about her relationship seems reasonable considering her abusive partner's manifold attempts at making Ruby anxious. Stark (2007) has argued that responses to coercive and controlling behaviour can be legitimised when looking at these responses in the context of the abusive relationship.

Heidi also talked about her overuse of text messaging when she was much younger.

Heidi: The first person I think I was in love with when I was maybe, thirteen? He lived, umm, far away and so I couldn't see him and so I just, I'm not proud of it at all, I just sent him lots of messages and then he ended up ignoring me for a long time. We are

friends now and I'm really pleased that he's forgiven me for that behaviour (original sample).

She explained that it was because of the geographical distance between herself and her partner.

Heidi: I think that if I'd probably been able to speak to him in person, even if nothing would have come of that, I would have felt better about it and would probably have just left him alone. But because I couldn't do that. Obviously this is filtered through twelve years of hindsight (original sample).

Heidi acknowledged that the behaviour was wrong, but she also said that she was speaking with hindsight, suggesting that she did not acknowledge this at the time. Both Ruby's and Heidi's overuse of text messaging occurred due to anxieties they had about the relationships that they were in. Stonard et al (2015) also found that female participants in their study became anxious when their partners did not reply to their text messages as quickly as they would have liked and participants described how this would encourage them to send more and more text messages, like Ruby and Heidi above.

Michael's overuse of text messaging and phone calls was also based on insecurities he had about his relationship, but in a different way.

Michael: I've made like pestering calls and texts and things, but from my perspective, it would be like I would be worried about this or that, you know, so-and-so, where has she gone, is she alright, why isn't she home, I'm worried. And [ex-girlfriend's] perspective would be like fuck off and let me live my life [laughing]. So, I think, it wasn't malicious from my end, but it was definitely interpreted as like controlling from [ex-girlfriend's] perspective (original sample).

Michael explicitly said that he knew that his partner interpreted this behaviour as controlling, which presumably, she did not like. If Michael knew that he was being perceived as being controlling, then logically, one would expect that he would have adapted his behaviour accordingly. Whether intentionally malicious or abusive or not, it cannot be denied that Michael did attempt to control his partner's behaviour using text messaging and phone calls and by asking her whereabouts. Earlier in the interview, Michael mentioned that his partner was 'notoriously difficult to get in contact with' (which he also states to be true for his current partner elsewhere in the interview), implying some resistance to his monitoring. Hester (1992: 3) has argued that men develop new ways to dominate women as women find ways to subvert male domination. Domination and control by individual men towards individual women is, in effect, a response to women's resistance. In other words, Michael's ex-girlfriend's resistance - being 'difficult to get in contact with' or telling Michael to 'fuck off and let me live my life' - served to aggravate Michael's controlling behaviour; behaviour which he considered justifiable based on her previous infidelity. Michael's argument that his behaviour was based on worry but interpreted by his partner as controlling behaviour shows that there are gender differences in the ways in which certain behaviours are perceived. Again, this supports Sears et al. (2006) who found that males were more likely to define behaviour as abuse if the behaviour was intended to be abusive, whereas females saw abuse as behaviour that harmed them.

In the COHSAR sample, fewer participants reported perpetrating emotionally abusive behaviours. Just three participants reported this behaviour in total – one in each age group sampled. In the 18-24-year-old age group, Janet said that she sometimes shouts at her current partner:

Janet: I think Tina is the only person I've ever really shouted at and she doesn't shout back ... then I'm really sorry. And usually - occasionally, I am really upset or I think that she's done something that's really, really upset me and (pause, sighs) that doesn't really make a difference in the sense - I still stop shouting and, and I'm sorry for shouting, but sometimes, I completely back down and say, 'No, I was wrong.' (COHSAR 18-24).

Jeb, in the 25-29-year-old age range, felt that he was emotionally abusive to his current partner.

Jeb: I abuse Phil regularly. You know, if, if we're looking at psychological abuse, then there will always be, there will always be certain circumstances where you want them to be hurt; you want them to feel like you feel. If you feel hurt you want to retaliate. Um, I try and manipulate situations, the same as I'm sure everybody does, you know, to get sometimes what you think you need or you want. That is a form of abuse. You're abusing the situation. You are manipulating somebody to deliver something which they wouldn't naturally have delivered. So that is abuse (COHSAR 25-29).

Jeb seems to have a broad definition of what psychological abuse can encompass and seems to suggest that everyone is guilty of it. I do not necessarily agree that trying to get what you want is always abusive, but Jeb's comments highlight the difficulty in what to define as abuse.

In the 30-34-year-old age range, Maxine admitted that she often 'bullied' her ex-partner:

Maxine: If he didn't agree with me I would bully him into - I bullied him into moving in with me. He didn't want to move in cause he thought it was it was a bit early, early days and he was quite, very quite careful person but I bullied (laughs) him into. Basically you know if I said jump he would say how high you know (COHSAR 30-34).

Maxine did add that she felt bad about this behaviour as her ex-partner was a good person, but she had only now come to realise that she had behaved in this way. From what these participants have said, none of them used emotional abuse as a form of control or used it as part of a pattern of abuse that constitutes coercive control.

Physical Violence Perpetration

When asked if they had ever used physical force against a partner, Alison, Sarah and Annie in the original sample admitted to being physically violent once in their relationships. Alison said that she did 'slap' her abusive partner once and this was during an argument.

Alison: I think it was just, I can't really quite remember, but it was just such an angry argument and, he was umm, he was just unrelenting and really loud and screaming in my face and things like that and just saying really horrible things. But it doesn't excuse it, I suppose (original sample).

This was in response to him 'screaming in [her] face', though she acknowledged that this was wrong. Likewise, Sarah said that she was physically violent towards her abusive partner when he turned up at her father's house.

Sarah: He turned up at my dad's house when I was at my dad's house and was like banging on the door and shouting and I went out and he was being really aggressive and then my dad didn't know if he would come out and I just pushed him really hard away from me to make sure he knew that I wasn't interested in him. And then I went back inside (original sample).

Again, Sarah used physical force in response to her abusive partner's behaviour. Although we cannot justify nor dismiss the physical force used by Alison and Sarah in their relationships, this behaviour should be looked at in response to the aggression that they were experiencing at the time the physical force was used and in the context of a of an ongoing abusive relationship. As Stark (2007) argued, female violence can be considered a reasonable defence mechanism in the context of coercive control.

Annie's use of physical force was in a completely different context to that of Alison and Sarah.

Annie: Umm, yes. In that relationship, the worst relationship. There was a time when, umm, he was being quite hysterical and shouting at me and sort of really asking me to hit him. And I didn't want it to happen, it was really strange, but he kept shouting at me to hit him, so I hit him in the face and then he shouted at me and I don't really understand, but yeah I have.

Donna: What happened just before he was asking you to hit him?

Annie: Actually this was the last time we broke up. He just went to my parents' house and kind of pushed his way through to try and get some things from my room, so little gifts he had bought me over the time he didn't want me to have anymore. Umm... and I was trying to get him out, and then that happened then (original sample).

The situation that Annie described here is perhaps unusual. Annie was verbally forced into hitting her abusive partner even though Annie was adamant that she did not want to do it. Annie's use of physical force was undertaken under duress and therefore does not constitute physical abuse but seems more closely aligned with what Johnson (2006) calls 'violent resistance', whereby victims of coercive control use violence in retaliation to violent and controlling behaviour. This incident should be considered as another way in which her abusive partner actively tried to control her behaviour, by making Annie do something that she did not want to do. Annie's partner could have been trying to, as Annie said, 'rationalise his anger', so that he had an excuse for his abusive behaviour. He may have wanted Annie to stoop down to his level, so that he would not be seen as the abuser in the relationship. Logically, as this was the end of the relationship, this could have also been another attempt to keep Annie in the relationship and preventing Annie from telling others about the abuse, as he could use the defence that Annie had been physically abusive. We may not know the exact reason for Annie's abusive partner's behaviour, but we can plausibly assume that this was a control tactic employed to keep Annie in the abusive relationship and to make

sure that the abuse remained hidden. Perpetrators employ a range of tactics to sustain coercive controlling relationships (Hester, 1992; Stark, 2007).

Again, in the COHSAR sample, a minority of the participants reported physical abuse perpetration. Each of these participants talked about being physically violent in response to violent behaviour perpetrated against them.

Anthony: I mean I have to say that I was like, did hit back.

Interviewer: To defend yourself?

Anthony: Um (pause and nervous laughter) Sort of, you know, to defend yourself but then, you know (laughing) giving a little extra as well. (COHSAR 18-24)

Gavin: Oh I struck my ex, well to be fair she slapped me around the face and I actually, you know I was completely shocked! She started laughing at me so I went right 'bang' (laughing) hit her back and just walked off. (COHSAR 25-29)

Valerie: It was like throwing crockery around rows once a month which is not healthy (laughs). (COHSAR 25-29)

Although each of these participants used physical violence in response to physical violence they received, this violence was more in retaliation of this behaviour than a defence mechanism. This behaviour does not seem to have been employed as way to control their partners as a mechanism of coercive control and is more akin to common couple violence (Johnson, 2006).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the abusive experiences of the young adults in this study. Young adults reported receiving abuse in their relationships. Twenty-four participants reported abuse within their relationships and emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse, though physical and sexual abuse were also reported. Coercive control

was experienced by ten participants: eight females and two males. For the younger participants, abuse was extended through technology. Some participants also perpetrated abusive behaviours within their relationships, mostly in the form of emotionally abusive behaviours though some physical violence was used by participants within their relationships.

Chapter 7: Findings Chapter Four: Love

This chapter examines participants' perceptions and experiences of love. This chapter begins by exploring participants' constructions of love, before moving on to look at participants' experiences of love within abusive relationships.

Participants' Constructions of Love

In both the original study and the COHSAR study, participants were asked about their ideas surrounding love and what love meant to them. When participants in the original sample were talking about their best and worst relationships, they were asked whether they loved their partners, whether their partners loved them, how they demonstrated love towards their partners and how their partners demonstrated love towards them. These questions were asked to all participants irrespective of whether participants indicated that there was abuse in these relationships. At the end of the interviews, participants were also asked general questions on love, including 'how do you describe love?' and 'how do you believe people show that they are in love?', questions which were dependent upon answers given by participants earlier on in the interviews. This section concentrates on how the participants in this study construct love to illustrate what love meant to them.

When Daniel described what love meant to him, he talked about love as self-sacrifice.

Daniel: Umm, I think it's really comes down to self-sacrifice, putting others before yourself, umm, and then that goes on to encompass a whole load of other things. It completely changes the way you act in, it influences everything. I don't know how much you would like me to go into that?

Donna: As much as you are willing to.

Daniel: Yeah, sure. Umm, So, I guess, umm, you know you show kindness, you be patient, umm, you wouldn't keep a record of what they've done that's wrong. If you love someone, then you forgive them, if they ask for it. You would be self-controlled, you wouldn't just, you know, fly off the handle, umm... I guess also you'd really care about it, so if something happened to someone you love, you're not going to be, you'd be a lot more bothered by it than if something really bad happened to someone that you didn't happen to love (original sample).

When asked how he believed people show that they are in love, Daniel continued to talk about self-sacrifice.

Daniel: I suppose you put the other person first as much as you can, umm, you let them know that you love them. So that could be with physical acts, straight out telling them, umm, I suppose you become interested in things that they are interested in, umm, you want to do things that they enjoy doing, umm, like I said, you give them things, you can do things for them (original sample).

This idea of self-sacrifice is evidently very important to Daniel, as he talked about this a few times. Throughout the course of the interview, Daniel talked about his relationships in relation to Christianity, as he described himself to be a devout Christian. None of the other participants talked about their faith at any point in the interviews. Self-sacrifice and forgiveness are central to the Christian faith (Enright et al., 2014) and this is perhaps why Daniel talked about these themes in relation to his own relationships and in his ideas about love. Daniel also said that love can be expressed with 'physical acts', previously in the interview Daniel talked about how love is often equated to the physical demonstration of love.

Daniel: I think, uh, in respect of love, language is usually quite physical, which isn't always straightforward, as a Christian, so though we have committed to celibacy

before marriage, we definitely do express love in that sense... Uh, pray for each other, that's quite a deep thing to share I think, especially when you're not with each other (original sample).

Much of what Daniel said about love relates back to his faith and Daniel is certainly unique in this sample in saying that praying for his girlfriend is a way of demonstrating his love for her. Although no other participants talked about self-sacrifice when they described what love meant to them, some participants did talk about love in an all-consuming way. Oscar talked about the boundless nature of love.

Oscar: I feel like it's, it's not really possible to explain it, like the first time I saw my girlfriend, I'm one of those people who believes that love at first sight can happen and umm I feel that it is not necessarily quantifiable...Umm, I feel like I guess it is unconditional. I feel like people have been trying to explain what love is for so long, that there have become so many clichés surrounding it that no one really knows anymore, but I feel like when you are in love you know it. But I guess that's difficult as well because you might think you are in love and then actually encounter love. So, what I am trying to say is that I'm not completely sure but I feel like you, when two people are in love, they know it, and that's the most important thing about relationships (original sample).

This idea that love is indescribable, but that you simply know it when you find it, was a common theme amongst these participants and this is reflected in the literature as few theorists have chosen to define what love is (Jackson, 1993). Similarly, participants evoked the idea the idea of love as unrestricted; that nothing can get in the way of love once you are in its thrall. Kate described love in a similar way.

Kate: Complete devotion, I would say. Complete and utter devotion to one person (original sample).

Kate's description of love has almost religious undertones, reminiscent of what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995) assertion that love has become a replacement for religion. This indicates that love means worship. Whilst Daniel talked about love within the context of his religion-Christianity-and how his faith dictates the way he understands and demonstrates love, Kate talked about love as a replacement for religion, and this is more closely related to descriptions of love given by other participants in this study. The theme of how love can be overpowering is continued by Sarah:

Sarah: It is hard [laughs]. Umm, I think strong feelings that you don't necessarily have control over. So it's not something you decide, you don't decide you really like someone, but you have a feeling where you want to be with them and you want to do nice things for them and you want to see them and you can't switch it on and off (original sample).

Similarly, Finola talked about love as being life-long and certain.

Finola: For me it is the feeling of wanting to be with someone for the rest of your life. And not having any doubts about that at all (original sample).

Jackson (1993:207) argued that love is 'overwhelming'. However, Jackson (1993) also argued that this leaves individuals emotionally exposed. Others have argued that love assists in upholding gender inequalities (Bawin-Legros, 2004; Smart, 2007) as women are usually responsible for providing all the emotional labour in relationships (Donovan and Hester, 2011). Additionally, previous literature also suggests that ideals such as putting a partner's needs before one's own is often a behaviour that is found amongst those who are victimised in abusive relationships (Chung, 2007; Towns and Scott, 2013). Therefore, this idea that love uncontrollable, that it can survive anything can be a particularly dangerous idea when looked at in the context of an abusive relationship.

Conversely, other participants spoke of love as being related to freedom. Alison said that now she has experienced love, she can describe it.

Alison: Mmm, now that I know what it really feels like, I'd say just happiness and joy and freedom.

Donna: And how do you believe people show that they are in love?

Alison: With support... being there for the person... encouraging them to be who they want to be. To reach their full potential and just respect (original sample).

The theme of being free to be who you are in a love-relationship was also raised by Heidi.

Heidi: I suppose there are different types of love. Umm... there's a, that sort of, butterflies that you get in the first stage of a relationship. I think that is a kind of love because it is quite consuming, but I think there is another type of love that maybe you only really understand after a couple of years, sort of, it's a mutual respect I think. Umm, and a commitment to help both you and your partner be better people, umm, I suppose love should lift you and not diminish you as a person? (original sample).

And again by Esther.

Esther: Mutual respect, contentment... umm, where you're just happy and you can't really quantify why (original sample).

Similarly, Annie talked about love as giving your partner freedom to be who they want to be.

Annie: Umm, I still don't really know if I've felt it, err, properly. Because every time I have a new relationship I feel like this is, I feel in love now, I didn't know it before. But I think from seeing other people that are in love and from feeling what I think might be love, it's... the sense of really wanting to be with someone and wanting to spend your time with someone else and kind of having an intimate relationship you couldn't have with anyone else. Umm, and wanting to be with someone a lot, or thinking about somebody a lot, but also kind of wanting them to be happy and do their own thing (original sample).

Annie juxtaposed this freedom and independence with wanting to spend a substantial amount of time with someone, indicating her belief that these two things can coexist in a healthy relationship. These ideas surrounding independence and freedom, but also wanting to spend time with a partner, based on the partners' own terms, fits closely with Giddens (1992) idea of the 'pure relationship', a relationship that is based on the individual wants of those in the relationship. Annie, however, also hinted at doubt of being in love, which, when asked to, she elaborated on.

Annie: I meant it is kind of like I have one relationship where I feel like I'm in love and said that to someone that I'm in love, then I'm in a new relationship and I'll think oh I really wasn't in love that time because this is what love feels like. And that kind of happens a lot. Umm, but yeah, I guess you kind of become a little bit obsessed with someone and you can't think about anyone else in that way (original sample).

The use of the word 'obsessed' fits in with participants who talked about love as a form of worship. The way Annie explained how she always questioned her love for previous partners shows that she does not consider this 'obsession' to be as long-term, in the same way as the participants who talked about devotion for their partners did. The difference between Annie and other participants, then, is that Annie considers this

‘obsession’ to be temporary rather than life-long. In the same way, Robert also questioned the unconditional nature of love.

Robert: I think it's a feeling that makes you be attached to someone, umm, romantically, and makes you want to do things with them and be with them and be there for them. Umm... yeah, well... I think, I think it exists, but I don't know if real love that lasts for a lifetime exists. Like I think you can feel love for a bit and then stop feeling love and then it can come again and then stop. Like it's not necessarily constant, it can go back and forth (original sample).

Although love created this idea of an emotional attachment to someone, Robert did not necessarily consider this to be as persistent and limitless as other participants in this study. Again, this links in with Giddens' (1992) idea of the 'pure relationship', as Giddens explained that these types of relationship are characterised by lasting only if both parties are gaining from the relationship or are wanting to be a part of it. Ruby also talked about love as being about contentment.

Ruby: I guess really kind of hopeful, in that you feel a lot more powerful, especially if you've got some sort of healthy relationship where you both, you've got confidence that you're in a loving relationship because you feel like you are capable of more and you feel more confident and generally a lot happier (original sample).

However, Ruby's conception of contentment was based on being in a partnership. Ruby's description of love gives the implication of equality within in a relationship, with both partners gaining from the relationship, which, once again, Giddens (1992) considered to be a characteristic of the 'pure relationship'. However, Ruby did highlight that this is only possible within a truly equal relationship, and as Jackson 1993) suggested, love is not usually balanced equally in relationships. Additionally, Jamieson (1999) has argued that equality is rarely the case in relationships, and so the 'pure relationship' is improbable.

Similarly, Michael saw trust as being extremely important for a love-relationship.

Michael: I think one of the most important things in love is trust or maybe like trust is. It's knowing that the other person knows that you'll be there for them and knowing that they'll be there for you. And trusting that they won't kind of like, umm, change their feelings for you dramatically. I think that's really important because umm, also trusting yourself that your feelings for them won't change dramatically. So I think that love is a sort of constancy, where you both rely on each other to be there, but also to not change hugely (original sample).

We can infer from Michael's description of love that he equated love with trust. It is not surprising that trust is considered a major part of a good relationship, as 'loyalty' is considered one of the premises for a love-relationship in western discourses (Donovan and Hester, 2011:83).

Megan, however, talked about love in a different way completely.

Donna: So first of all, how would you describe love?

Megan: Really energy consuming. But, really fulfilling and... I think it just makes you quite optimistic about life and it is, it's really exciting... And yeah, I think it's a little bit of a, quite, a bit of a shift in priorities maybe. Maybe it's not just all about you and it's about like how happy you can make other people as well, and... yeah, it is really scary.

Donna: You said it's really energy consuming, what did you mean by that?

Megan: Like you've got a whole other person to think about and to consider and... it, if you're so emotionally invested in somebody, it's *really*, it's *really* tiring I find. Although it's great and it does, it makes you so happy and excited as well, it, umm, it yeah, I dunno, it's quite scary, I find it quite scary and daunting.

Donna: What do you mean by scary?

Megan: Umm, like, the fact that what's happening now, is really, is ultimately quite fragile and like life can get in the way of you loving somebody. And, umm, yeah, it is scary the fact you let somebody in and you trust somebody so much and you, you open yourself up in ways that you haven't before and then they have the power then to, you trust that they won't, but they have the power to really hurt you and like shape you, that is, I think that is really scary that you can give another human being the power to completely shape your life (original sample).

It is interesting that although Megan did talk about similar things to other participants for example she talked about happiness and putting your partner's needs first, Megan was the only participant to identify both positive and negative aspects to these constructs. Throughout the interview, Megan described her relationship as positive and her partner as loving, but she was also aware of how these feelings between herself and her partner have the potential to cause harm if things were to go wrong or if the relationship were to become restricting upon her freedom. This again relates to what Jackson (1993) said about love making you susceptible to being hurt, but the difference between Megan's answer describing love and the answers of other participants is that Megan is very much aware of the negative repercussions of falling in love and the power it can have over an individual's emotional state.

In the COHSAR study, participants were also asked about their experiences of love in their best and worst relationships, as well as more general questions on what love meant to them. These participants' reflections on love were largely like those of the original sample, in that there were those who saw love as unconditional, those who saw love as more temporary and some who fell somewhere in the middle. Many of the participants saw love as something that was unconditional. Most of these participants were in the 30-34-year-old age range, like Amy.

Amy: I think love is much more, is a lot deeper. It's more enduring. And I think it remains with you really. Remains with you for a long, long time and never quite leaves you (COHSAR 30-34).

Amy considered love to be life-long. Elsewhere, Amy also suggested that love is unconditional:

Amy: You support your partner no matter what, really (COHSAR 30-34).

Both comments suggest that Amy believed that love is absolute; that whatever happens in a relationship, love does not waiver.

There was a minority of participants in the 25-29 (three participants) and 18-24-year-old (one participant) age groups who talked about love in this way. Lynn, when asked where she had got her ideas of love from, explained that the film *True Romance* was her main source:

Lynn: And the love that's described in that film is a constant, enduring, through all sorts of shit that's going on, support for each other and a little team work thing. And there's differences in the people but they, they accept each other and work through them (COHSAR 25-29).

Again, Lynn described how the film promotes a love which is permanent and boundless. She suggested that this is the idea of love which she subscribes to.

In the 18-24-year-old age range, Barbara talked about love in a similar way.

Barbara: I just think it's a different, like, feeling altogether, where, I dunno, where you're completely, be with them no matter what (COHSAR 18-24).

Yet again, Barbara was saying that love can overcome anything within a relationship. These ideas that love is everlasting and unconditional again are reminiscent of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995) assertion that love has become synonymous with worship.

Five of the participants in the COHSAR study aligned more closely with Giddens' (1992) idea of the 'pure relationship'. All these participants fell into the 18-24 or 25-29-year-old age groups. Arlene, in the 25-29-year-old age group, talked about how relationships are not always everlasting.

Arlene: Certain people you meet at certain times and its ok to be in a relationship for say a relatively short period if you're happy and that not all relationships are meant to last forever and why should they? That doesn't necessarily mean it's a failure on your part or a bad thing, em, or that you're being overly fussy. That that's ok and that's what I've started to realise now (COHSAR 25-29).

For Arlene, it was OK to end a relationship if was not making you happy. Janet, in the 18-24-year-old-age-group, talked about her liberal attitude towards love.

Janet: My idea of what a relationship is, is quite unconventional and I don't necessarily adhere to the kind of normal assumptions people have about relationships and stuff...I kind of see it - see everything as fluid and it could be - we could make it different, so we don't have to do it this way, and we don't have to do it that way and let's not assume that anything's going to be a certain way and, yeah. So I'm quite open-minded I hope (COHSAR 18-25).

We can infer from what Janet said that she considered relationships as adaptable; that a relationship is personalised to the individuals within that relationship. The idea of freedom of commitment is an idea that Giddens (1992) pronounces in his 'pure relationship' theory.

Other participants had varying beliefs about love, that fit in between the two streams above. Both Nadia and Hazel talked about there being different forms of romantic love.

Nadia: Being in love makes you blind and makes you forgive certain things. But the love, the deep love, actually makes you not forgive things, but try and sort them, out deal with them (COHSAR 25-29).

Nadia suggested that there is a form of love that can seem unconditional, but also a love that is not based on accepting certain behaviours no matter what. But based on working together to resolve problems; a more equal and reciprocal form of love. Hazel, in the 18-24-year-old age group also suggested that there is more than one form of romantic love.

Hazel: You only ever fall in love once but you can have varying degrees of love before you find that one person that you want to spend the rest of your life with...I was very much 'no you just, you only ever fall in love once and anything else, you know, there's no point being in relationships unless you know that one person is for you' em. But

now I can see that there are very much, there's a very sort of sliding scale with that (COHSAR 18-24).

These examples suggest that there are different forms of love; love that can seem all consuming and permanent and other, more momentary forms of love. Individuals can experience different forms of romantic love throughout their lives.

Participants in the 30-34-year-old age group were more likely to see love as unconditional, whereas the majority of those aged 25-29 and nearly all those aged 18-24 did not subscribe to this belief; the younger two age groups were more likely to see love as temporary, momentary and varying in emotional impact.

Some of the participants in this study expressed how difficult it was to describe love, which is consistent with lack of consistent and uncontested definitions of love in the literature (Jackson, 1993; Fraser, 2003; Donovan and Hester, 2014). Despite this, participants were able to provide full description of love to show what love meant to them.

Love in Abusive Relationships

Being in Love with the Abuser

Every participant in this study was asked whether they were in love with their partners in their best and worst relationships. This section concentrates on the how victims of abuse talked about being in love with their abusive partners.

In the original sample, Alison said that she thought she was in love with her abusive partner at the time of the relationship.

Alison: I thought I was, but really I realise now that I wasn't, because it was a unhealthy... [Speaking quickly] love requires, like, respect, so that can't have been love, in a sense (original sample).

Since the end of that relationship, Alison had come to the realisation that she cannot have been in love as she did not respect her partner. When asked why she believed that she was in love at the time of the relationship, Alison said because she felt that it was more dependency than love.

Alison: I think I was a bit dependent and I was young and under the impression that it was love (original sample).

Alison had confused dependency with love and she felt that this was because she was young. However, when Alison was asked whether there was a specific time when she felt most in love in that relationship, she said there was not.

Alison: I don't, not really, it was, it was always like unhappy, umm, so, no, I don't think there was ever that feeling of I'm in love, this is great, I'm really happy. So it was more negative emotions, so, yeah, looking back (original sample).

That Alison can only remember the negative parts of the relationship, despite saying that she believed she was in love at the time, is most likely down to hindsight and the fact that negative emotions in this relationship outweighed anything positive she may have felt at the time. Enander (2011) also found that female participants in her study first minimised abuse that they received from their partners during earlier stages of the relationship, but when their relationships became more abusive than not, the women then sought to fall out of love with their partners to end the relationship. Alison talked about how the end of the relationship came when she realised that she did not love him after he had been abusive for a long time.

Alison: There was just a moment when I kind of realised like, I completely had no feelings of love towards this person and the only reason I'm staying is because I feel sorry for him (original sample).

The abuse he had experienced as a child meant Alison previously made excuses for her abusive partner's behaviour, but she came to the realisation that this sympathy that she had for him was not love. Dependency was also the reason that Sarah believed that she was in love with her abusive partner.

Sarah: Because we had been together for quite a long time and we were quite dependent on each other, which to me felt like love (original sample).

Again, Sarah mistook the dependency that she and her and her abusive partner had on one another as love. However, when she was asked if there was a time when she doubted her love towards him, Sarah said that this occurred towards the end of the relationship.

Sarah: We were sort of together because we had been together for such a long time and we didn't really know any different, so we stayed together. And I recognised it at the time as just staying together for the sake of it rather than stayed together because I loved him (original sample).

The female participants Fraser (2005) spoke to said that they felt that they needed to work at their relationships, so that they did not look like they had just given up. From what Sarah said, this idea that one should work at a relationship to keep it going may have been at play within Sarah's relationship. This was likely because Sarah and her partner had been together for a long time and so they felt obliged to try and make it

work, despite being unhappy. Robert said that he felt that he was in love with his abusive partner, otherwise he would not have stayed.

Robert: Yeah I think I was because I dealt with that for nearly a year or so. I think that in order to, well, in order to stay within such an unhealthy relationship you have to either be in love or to feel so much guilt that you can't get away from that. I don't know which one it was [laughs], maybe a bit of both, but yeah I think I was in love (original sample).

Ruby also felt that she was in love with her abusive partner because she put up with negative behaviours.

Ruby: I was willing to go through problems and willing to put myself through unhappy times for the sake of like the positive feeling that when it was good it felt worth it. In comparison to now when I think of how I feel towards my current partner, I know that if there's a problem, I'm willing to, you know, work through it, whereas, then, if the problem wasn't getting solved, I was willing to stay for far too long (original sample).

This is like Wood's (2001) finding that when women were in abusive relationships in her study, they felt that love would get them through it and Kearney's (2001) concept of 'enduring love'; concentrating on surviving abusive episodes and keeping a relationship alive because the love of the abusive partner is still wanted. Fraser (1999) has also argued that love is often used as a defence for acting in ways which would not be acceptable outside of the context of a romantic relationship. Therefore, Robert and Ruby put up with the behaviours that they experienced within their relationships because they believed that love excused it.

Oscar said that he believed that he was in love with his partner.

Oscar: I think I thought I was, but I, I think it was more about the fact, it was, you know where you have that whole thing, like everyone wants what they can't have... I feel like there was a lot more of that than I realised (original sample).

Oscar was not in a monogamous relationship with his abusive partner. His answers elsewhere in the interview suggest that he wanted to be in a relationship with this young woman, but the young woman did not feel the same way. Oscar's answer here suggests that he felt that he was in love with the young woman at the time, but now recognises that this perhaps was not love, but more of a pining for her because he could not be in a relationship with her.

Conversely, Annie did not think that she was in love with her abusive partner.

Annie: No, looking back, I don't think I was. Or I don't think I knew what love was or what was okay. Umm, and I think that if I was to enter that relationship at this age, at 25... it would be a lot different and... I wouldn't accept a lot of things that happened at an early stage in that relationship. So I don't think I was in love, I think I was maybe, umm, more kind of scared of what would happen if it ended. Or maybe a sense of inertia (original sample).

Fear was more prominent in Annie's relationship than love. She was afraid of what would happen if she ended the relationship and so stayed. As already discussed, being afraid of what would happen if a relationship ended is a common reason for sustaining abusive relationships.

Likewise, Heidi did not seem to love her current partner, who had been abusive. When asked if she was in love with her partner, Heidi said that she *was*.

Heidi: Umm, I was. Umm, certainly (original sample).

Although Heidi did not say that she is not in love with her partner, she did not say that she is either. When asked if there was a specific time when she felt most in love during this relationship, Heidi again referred to an earlier stage in her relationship.

Heidi: Umm, I suppose a lot of people would probably think that it is at the start of the relationship, but I'm not sure that I would...Umm, and I would probably say three or four years after we first got together, umm, we, we felt quite comfortable together, I think, umm... but not in a way that we weren't making an effort with each other. We were still making an effort with each other, but we felt comfortable at the same time. Umm, and that was, that was really nice. We felt like, like a unit, I suppose (original sample).

When asked if there was a specific time she felt least in love, Heidi said that she had felt least in love during the last year.

Heidi: Umm, the last year has been pretty **bad**. Umm, the last few months have been okay, but, umm, since maybe last summer (original sample).

Heidi's use of the past tense throughout the interview regarding her love for her partner suggested that although she had been in love with her partner at one point, this is no longer the case and that she was remaining in the relationship, despite his abusive behaviour, due to an obligation she felt to him and the relationship; she felt it was her responsibility to take care of her abusive partner and she felt that she should work at their relationship in order to sustain it. Jackson (1993) argued that in relationships, one partner usually gives more emotionally than the other. Women are usually responsible for providing the emotional labour in a relationship (Towns and Adams, 2000; Chung, 2005; 2007; Donovan and Hester, 2011), and in Heidi's case, this was true. Although Heidi did not seem to love her partner at the time of the interview, Heidi gave more emotionally in her relationship and her partner took advantage of this, for example by telling her that he thought about suicide when she attempted to

leave. This was a deliberate attempt to play on Heidi's emotions and prevent her from leaving.

Participants sampled from the COHSAR sample who talked about love within their abusive relationships. In the 18-24-year-old age group, participants were equally as likely to say that they did or did not love their abusive ex-partners. Hazel, for example, had been in two previous abusive relationships, one with a male and one with a female partner. She said that she had not been in love with her female ex-partner, but instead she was 'infatuated' even though she felt this was love at the time. However, she had believed she was in love with male ex-partner, but now realises this is not the case.

Hazel: I thought I loved him but I realise now that I was just scared of him and... put up with it because I didn't want the ramifications of what might happen. I don't know what I was so afraid of would happen... I just sort of put up with it (COHSAR 18-24).

Like Annie in the original sample, fear was a more prominent feeling than love in her abusive relationship.

However, those in the 25-29 and 30-34-year-old age groups were more likely to say that they loved their abusive ex-partners than to say they did not.

Lynn felt like she and her abusive ex-partner loved each other equally, but that they both took it in turns to show more love to each other in their relationship.

Lynn: At the beginning it definitely felt like we both loved each other shed loads... Anyway, our relationship was totally fucked up.... it definitely swung back and forth like that for quite some time, and that's how it seemed, like one was loving the other, whilst the other one was like, 'No, we've got to finish this, or get over it (COHSAR 25-29).

From what Lynn has said, we can infer that Lynn felt that there was love in their relationship, but when something would go wrong, either of them would fall out of love slightly with the other. Again, this supports Enander's (2011) finding that victims of abuse would often separate their abuser into two people – the good and the bad.

Participants said that they felt as though they were in love with their abusive ex-partners because they tolerated behaviours that they would not have otherwise.

Bruce: You tolerate a lot really... There was no kind of equality in that relationship. Malcolm would do...whatever he wanted to do and erm, all I wanted to do was be with him and all the time and be lovely and he didn't... But I was just like oh, puts arms round him and could spend hours looking at him and just being with him and I think he really liked that (COHSAR 30-34).

Bruce felt he was more in love with his abusive ex-partner than his ex-partner was with him, but he felt like his partner enjoyed the sense of control this gave him.

People do not always realise the abuse they are suffering until they are out of the relationship. Other participants talked about believing they were in love because they felt a dependency on their abusive ex-partner:

Emma: I *needed* her...I think this is the difference really between the two relationships that I felt that I *needed*, erm, Gail the, the first girlfriend ...it was definitely a very needy relationship, [hits the table with each word] on both parts, erm, but because I couldn't recognise that that's, that's actually what was going on...I couldn't reconcile the emotional investment that I had (COHSAR 30-34).

Feeling that a relationship should be worked on to keep it going has also been found by others (Wood, 2001; Kearney, 2001; Fraser, 2005).

Despite these slight differences, participants in all age ranges said that they grew to loathe their abusive ex-partners.

Anthony: Even if I did love him, which I didn't, it wouldn't show because it got to the point of hatred (COHSAR 18-24).

Arlene: I was starting to dislike him and I was starting to become more aware of like how much I'd lost in the relationship ... And I suppose I was starting to like begrudge him for that... So I think I became, starting to become quite resentful (COHSAR 25-29).

Emma: I mean by the end I hated her. It was definite that I just hated her...I then resented the years that I'd spent with her (COHSAR 30-34).

Despite the differences in feelings about love in abusive relationships between the different age groups, a reoccurring theme was the negative feelings towards their abusive partners. Again, this supports Enander's (2011) finding that victims of

domestic violence minimise abuse at first, but when their partners abusive more regularly, victims actively sought to fall out of love with their partners.

Abuser's Love

Participants in this study were all asked whether they thought their partners were in love with them in their best and worst relationships. In the same way as above, this section concentrates on how participants who had been victimised talked about their abusive partners' love for them and the ways in which their partners showed this love towards them.

When asked if she believed her partner was in love in her relationship, Annie said that she was not sure.

Annie: I guess, like, maybe. I don't know. Like, maybe he was in love and then that made him behave like that or maybe... I was kind of like a possession possibly that he kind of wanted to keep and that was what made him behave like that. He did tell me that he loved me and he was quite intense with it. But, you know... I was 18, 19, but he'd kind of said that he wanted to marry me and do all that stuff. Things that I hadn't really thought about or things that I didn't think would be happening in my life until ten years'. He used to talk about that, so maybe he did, I don't really know. Can someone like that really love anyone? (original sample).

Annie thinks that her abusive partner may have loved her and that is why he acted the way he did. However, Annie said that he did not do much to make her feel loved.

Annie: Except from the kind of generic day to day go and do something... like go out for tea, like normal date stuff, but I think in comparison with other relationships I've had since, he did definitely say it more than anyone else has done... and in a lot of my relationships, they've kind of done more things to make me feel like I am being loved or cared about (original sample).

Later in the interview Annie talked about her vulnerability.

Annie: He came along at a time in my life when I was pretty vulnerable, umm, and probably quite easy for someone like that to get in with (original sample).

Annie's vulnerability stemmed from the fact that she had a poor relationship with her parents. Her partner could have used this and declarations of love to entrap Annie in an abusive relationship, as Annie did not feel as though she had anyone else. This potentially made it easier for Annie's partner to isolate and control her, while also making it easier to hide the abuse and sustain the relationship. This supports Jackson's (2001) finding that many of the young women in her study had been in conflict with friends or family when their abusive relationships began, meaning that the new relationships made them feel good but then did not have their families' support when the abuse occurred. Alison also said that she did not know whether her abusive partner loved her.

Alison: I have no idea. I don't think I could say that for him that, I think that the way he treated me wasn't love, in my own terms (original sample).

When asked if he ever did anything to demonstrate love towards her, Alison said it was never innocent.

Alison: Yeah, yes, but they were always laced with like, this implication of control that he wanted over me (original sample).

Alison's answer suggests that her abusive partner used to use practices of love as a way of controlling her within her relationship with him, in the same way as Annie said. Stark (2007) has argued that coercive control is hidden, and we need to look at the meanings and context of certain behaviours to identify the abuse that is taking place.

Robert was not sure if his partner loved him or if she felt dependent upon him because of her mental health issues.

Robert: Well I don't know if it was love or not but she felt that I was someone on who she could count to deal with her problems, so I think she got attached to me and then furthered that attachment, so maybe love. I don't know if it was real love or just like that person is there for me, so maybe I should like get really attached and become dependent on that person. I don't know if it was real love or not (original sample).

Sarah also spoke about dependency being confused for love in her relationship.

Sarah: I think that he was dependent on me as someone who had been there for like ten years, but probably didn't love me (original sample).

When asked why she thought he did not love her, Sarah said because he had been unfaithful.

Sarah: Because he slept with other people and I don't think you cheat on somebody you love (original sample).

Dependency has been a running theme throughout these participants' ideas surrounding whether they loved their abuser or whether they felt their abuser loved them in their relationships. Love is seen as a female emotion (Cancian, 1986; Fraser, 2003) and women are socialised into being dependent, whereas men are socialised into being independent (Cancian, 1986), which is often depicted in fairy-tale stories of

Princes and Princesses (Town and Adams, 2000). However, amongst these participants, dependency can be something that goes both ways in a relationship, particularly in the case of Sarah who said that there was a mutual dependency. This could be something that is particular to the age group of those included in this study, as these participants were talking about relationships that they were having from their teenage years onwards, when they were, on the most part, being sustained by their parents as students, and so did not have the structural factors that can cause female dependency on males within relationships.

Sarah also considered her partners infidelity to be proof he did not love her. Jackson (1993) has argued that love is seen as the basis of for sexual relationships, and so Sarah's reaction to her partner's infidelity is understandable. From Sarah's perspective, if love is the basis for a sexual relationship and her partner was having sex with other people, then perhaps his love was not confined to Sarah.

Ruby's abusive partner gave her confusing messages when it came to how he felt about her.

Ruby: Umm, it would have been very, like umm, like I said, short, sharp bursts where it was very intense, so he was never like oh I think I've got feelings for you, it was I literally do not want to be with anyone else and it was, it was never small, meaningless statements, it was all or nothing, so it was really hard to gauge where I was in respect to how they were showing love towards me, whereas I was pretty constant and I was, I always made it clear that it didn't matter what they did, I was always there (original sample).

Later in the interview, Ruby talked more about how he would give off mixed-messages.

Ruby: They'd contact me, tell me, like I said, the umm, I've got really strong feelings for you, I love you and this that and the other, and then they'd cut contact altogether. And so I wouldn't, so when I'd see them, in school or you know if I saw them out, it would

be, they'd completely ignore me and then, umm, after, you know, a few weeks, they'd come back and be like I'm sorry, I've missed you and it would be the same, I'd get my hopes up again. But it was like a cycle, like it would happen without fail and sometimes it would be six months between not, no contact and then they'd pick me up again and I'd be hooked again (original sample).

When we consider the context of Ruby's relationship, the way her abusive partner would give off mixed-signals, whilst also being emotionally manipulating, controlling and coercing Ruby into doing things that she did not want to do, we can begin to understand why Ruby was insecure about the relationship and why she would bombard him with text messages, questioning him about what he was doing and who we was with; we can see that Ruby's response was legitimate in the context of coercive control, as Stark (2007) has argued.

Oscar was also unsure about whether his partner loved him.

Oscar: I think, I don't know. Umm, I think if she was, she didn't realise until it was sort of too late and I don't know (original sample).

He thought that if she was in love with him, she did not realise until after the relationship had ended. Later, Oscar said that he did not think that she loved in the way that he wanted.

Oscar: When I kind of realised that she was, basically kind of dominating me as a person rather than like, like she'd get like annoyed when I didn't see her, but then like... Basically when I realised that she didn't properly love in the way I imagine love to be (original sample).

Conversely, Heidi was sure that her abusive partner was in love with her.

Heidi: Umm, I think so, yes [sounds confident in this]. He's certainly been trying very hard recently. Umm, and he's been on his best behaviour. Umm, because I tried to break up with him a couple of times (original sample).

Heidi is sure her partner loves her, even though she implied that she is no longer in love with him. She said that since she attempted to break up with him, his behaviour has improved. However, at other points in the interview, Heidi said that she did not think that her partner respected her.

Heidi: Umm, it made me feel stupid and I don't like to feel stupid. Umm, and it just made me feel sort of belittled, and like he didn't really care, umm, that's one of the conversation we've had, you know, you can tell somebody that you love them, but if you don't act like you love them, if you don't treat them with respect then can you really say that you do love them? Umm, and that's been a bit of a point of contention in our relationship because I said that you can't love somebody if you don't show them respect (original sample).

Heidi suggested that her partner's lack of respect for her made her feel as though he did not love her. In the same way as Heidi did not want to label her relationship as abusive but was willing to suggest that parts of the relationship were abusive, she did not seem to want to label the relationship as bad.

Heidi: I think overall it's been positive. Umm, but I'm no longer blind to the negatives... I think that if you segment it in to certain time periods, there's probably been times where it has been more negative and more positive. But at the moment it's quite good (original sample).

At the time of the interview, Heidi had said that things were starting to improve, and perhaps therefore she felt able to say that she was sure that her partner loved her,

despite being contradictory about this throughout the interview. Heidi could have said that her partner loved her to justify why she was remaining within the relationship regardless of his behaviour. Towns and Adams (2000), Wood (2001), Fraser (2005), Donovan and Hester (2011; 2014) and Toscano (2014) all found that love from abusers in relationships often made it difficult for the victim to end the relationship.

Participants in the COHSAR sample were asked whether they felt their abusive partners had loved them and, like in the original sample, their responses were mixed; seven of the COHSAR participants sampled felt that their abusive partners had loved them, while six participants said that their abusive partners had not loved them at the time of the relationship. However, this parity shifted when looking at each age group individually. In the 18-24-year-old age range, most of the participants felt that their abusive ex-partner partners had not loved them. Although both Anthony and Russell said that their partners said that they loved them they did not think this was true.

Anthony: Well he told me that he did, after we'd been going out for four days, which I thought was a *bit* weird. Um. But you know he was drunk at the time, and he's, I (pause) I don't think he did (COHSAR 18-24).

Russell: No, not at all. Not now, anyway (COHSAR 18-24).

Barbara, however, did believe that her abusive ex-partner had loved her, even despite the violence.

Barbara: I genuinely felt she did still love us, and I knew she did (COHSAR 18-24).

Barbara *knew* that her ex-partner loved her even though she was abusive towards her. Again, she considered behaviours associated with coercive control to be proof of love in her relationship.

In the 25-29-year-old age range, participants were equally as likely to feel that their abusive partners loved them as there were to feel they did not.

Karen felt that her abusive ex-partner had loved her more than she loved him. She explained that this was demonstrated when she broke up with him.

Karen: He reacted really badly and he kind of was phoning like three o'clock in the morning for like three months, you know, it was just a bit messy really (COHSA 25-29).

Karen saw these phone calls as proof that he must have loved her.

Conversely, Arlene felt that the way she was treated was proof that her abusive ex-partners had not loved her.

Arlene: I just don't, I can't see how. To me it's more about obsession and control erm. But I know there'll be a lot of people who'd shoot me down for that and say 'no, hang on. You know I do feel this. I am genuinely sorry and I don't want to act like this' but I think it's more about negative like obsession than about love (COHSAR 25-29).

Arlene's experience of two abusive relationships and a father who was violent towards her mother has shown her that abusive relationships cannot be loving relationships.

In the 30-34-year-old age, most participants felt that their abusive ex-partners had loved them. Maxine felt that her ex-partner *thought* he loved her.

Maxine: I mean I tried to get away from him a lot of times and he always tried he, he would follow me he would go to my house my work wherever he could get me so I think it was more the idea of being in love (COHSAR 30-34).

Maxine believed her ex-partner always wanting to be with her was a demonstration of love.

Bruce was the only participant aged 30-34 who did not believe his abusive partner had been in love with him.

Bruce: He said he did and I suppose I thought so at the time but I honestly don't believe that he was (COHSAR 30-34).

Although he may have thought so during the relationship, Bruce does not believe that his abusive partner had loved him.

Participants in the COHSAR sample considered behaviours such as surveillance and micro-regulation to be associated with love from their abusive partners. Other studies have found that controlling behaviours are often seen as proof of love (Fraser, 2005;

Chung, 2007; Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2011; Towns and Scott, 2013; Toscano, 2014; Barter et al., 2015). It is interesting that the younger participants in this study were least likely to associate these behaviours with love.

Conclusion

Constructions of love amongst older participants linked love to ideas of religion, considering love to be uncontrollable worship that is everlasting in the way that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) posit. However, younger participants were more likely to describe love in more nuanced and fluid ways, more akin to the way Giddens' (1992) described the 'pure relationship'. This chapter has also shown that ideas surrounding love also helped to keep participants within their abusive relationships. Most of the participants who reported experiencing abuse within their relationships thought that they were in love with their abusive partner, though some were doubtful of this love now. Most of the participants who had been victimised said that they were unsure as to whether their abusive partners loved them at the time of the relationship.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This qualitative study was the first in the United Kingdom to look at coercive control and love within the relationships of young adults. It was found that coercive control can exist in the relationships of young adults. Constructions of love can help to tie young adults into these relationships, but these constructions operate alongside feelings of fear, guilt and responsibility. These findings were obtained through semi-structured interviews and secondary analysis of interview transcripts.

Abuse in Young Adults' Relationships and Coercive Control

Participants in this study talked about abuse within relationships in varying ways. Though most participants agreed that emotional abuse is the most common form of abuse relationships, they suggested that physical abuse was considered a more obvious form of abuse that is more damaging. Participants seemingly talked about abuse in ungendered terms and sexual abuse was rare in participants' definitions of abusive behaviour within relationships.

Participants in the original sample considered abuse to be common within the relationships of young adults, but this was talked about more in terms of specific acts, rather than as an ongoing pattern of abuse constitutive of coercive control, suggesting that participants think of abuse more in terms of acts and incidents, rather than its cumulative effect. Stark (2007; 2010) has argued that coercive control is gendered, but looking at specific incidents of violence, rather than the pattern of abuse, the workings of coercive control means it remains hidden and so does its gendered nature. A small minority of the participants in this sample, who did not have experience of abuse themselves or as witnesses to other relationships, believed that abuse is uncommon in young adults' relationships and much more common in other age groups.

Some of the participants used their own experiences and insider-knowledge of abusive relationships to define abusive relationships. Despite this, some participants had issues with applying these definitions to their own relationships, even though they had highlighted the abusive behaviours that they had been subject to throughout the

course of their interviews. This is in line with the findings of Jackson (2001), Chung (2007) and Stark (2007), who all found that women do not want to label themselves as victims.

Twenty-four participants in this study experienced some form of abuse within their relationships. This amounted to over two thirds of the sample, in a study that did not specifically select participants based on their abusive relationship experiences. Abusive behaviours were experienced by both female and male participants.

Most participants who were victimised had experienced emotional abuse and these experiences commonly included micro-regulation of behaviour and surveillance; insults from a partner; being threatened; and being made to feel afraid of a partner. Despite emotional abuse being the most prominent form of abuse reported, physical and sexual abuse was also apparent.

Sexual pressure and/or violence was overwhelmingly experienced by female participants. The experiences of sexual pressure amongst these young women brought up debates surrounding consent and unwanted sex, highlighting the blurred line between pressure and force; that just because a woman has sex with a man without being forced, it does not mean that this sexual encounter is wanted and/or consensual, as has been argued previously (Mackinnon, 1989; Walker, 1997; Morgan et al., 2006; Burkett, 2010). As some of the experiences of sexual pressure and violence were experienced within relationships participants did not define as abusive, this shows that this pressure is normalised and based on ideas surrounding gender and sexuality; that males are socialised into ignoring female wants (Mackinnon, 1989), females are expected to put male sexual needs above their own in relationships and the sexual decisions that young women make are constrained by the norms of female sexuality (Mackinnon, 1989; Walker, 1997; Holland et al., 1998; Morgan et al., 2006; Burkett, 2010). Evidence of a reluctance to label sexual violence as domestic violence, again supporting the assertion that those who have experienced abusive behaviours, are reluctant to be labelled as victims of domestic violence (Jackson, 2001; Chung, 2007; Stark, 2007).

We can also see that the 'male-in-the-head' (Holland et al., 1998) is relevant in the relationships of these young adults and heterosexuality is institutionalised; masculinity is privileged in that putting male needs above female needs is normalised in the relationships of these young adults. As only one male in this study experienced sexual violence, these findings support the findings of other studies that sexual violence and pressure is gendered and that females of all ages are more likely to experience this form of abuse (Foshee, 1996; Jackson, 1999; Hird, 2000; Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2011; Hamby and Turner, 2013; Fox et al., 2013).

Research Question 1: Can we use Stark's typology of coercive control to look at how/why domestic violence is gendered in young adults' relationships?

The findings of this study suggest that coercive control is apparent in the relationships of some young adults. In this study ten participants experienced coercive control in their relationships, according to Stark's (2007) typology.

These participants all experienced domestic violence that was emotional; they each experienced attempts to isolate them and restrict their freedom by partners who exerted control over who they were seeing and what they were doing; and all experienced intimidation in the form of threats and/or insults. In addition, some of these participants also experienced physical and/or sexual violence. For the younger participants this coercive control was exacerbated through the use technology. This resulted in fear and the loss of free-will that Stark (2007) equates with a liberty crime. Although over half of the female participants who experienced coercive control were non-heterosexual, the majority of these women received this abuse from previous male partners. However, two of these participants experienced coercive control in same-sex relationships. Additionally, two gay males in this study experienced coercive control. This suggests that although coercive control is gendered as females predominantly experience this form of abuse, gender is not the only risk-factor in same-sex relationships.

The pattern of abuse that constitutes coercive control is apparent within the relationships of young adults in the same way in which it is apparent within the relationships of older adults, but this pattern is more individualised to this specific age group. Technology is used to further control and manipulate behaviour. The majority of the younger participants who experienced coercive control stated that technology was used by their abusive partners in this way, though this was also experienced by participants who reported other forms of abuse too.

A small minority of the participants in this study lived with their partners. That most participants did not live with their partners, but still experienced coercive control shows that abusers do not have to live with their victims to employ the full mechanisms of coercive control. Technology no doubt makes this much easier for abusers.

Contrary to the findings of other studies (Kearney, 2001; Wood, 2001; Chung, 2007), most participants did not blame themselves for the abuse that they suffered. This could be because most of the participants in this study were no longer in relationships with their abusive partners so did not feel responsible for their partners' behaviour; they did not feel that they had to excuse their partners' behaviour and they had more time to reflect on these relationships.

Some of the participants did perpetrate abusive behaviours within their relationships and most of this was in the form of emotional abuse. Participants talked about checking up on their partners because of the lack of trust within their relationships and this was mostly down to fears of infidelity, consistent with the findings of Stonard et al. (2015). Insults and manipulation were also used by some of the participants, but when looked at in context, though not necessarily a 'healthy' relationship behaviour, these insults did not seem to constitute abuse.

None of the participants reported perpetrating sexually abusive behaviours. Some participants did admit to being physically violent, all of which were in retaliation to their own victimisation. Although the perpetration of abusive behaviours should never

be minimised, participants' perpetration of abusive behaviours in this study did not constitute coercive control.

There were gender differences in the ways in which the impact of abuse was perceived. Most of the female participants who were victimised in this study were negatively impacted by the abuse suffered and all of the victims of coercive control said that they feared for their own safety due to the behaviour of their abusive partners. Though some of the male participants reported fear for their own safety, other males also talked about abuse being defined by the intention of behaviour, rather than the impact of the behaviour. Sears et al. (2006) also found that males in their study were more likely to define abuse as behaviour that was *intended* to harm, where females saw abuse as behaviour that *did* harm them.

Love and Relationships

Research Question 2: What does 'love' mean to young adults?

No real gender differences were found in the constructions of love given by participants in this study, as females and males talked about love in the same ways. Participants in this study described love in different ways. Older participants were more likely to describe love as being about putting other's needs before their own, being forgiving, all-consuming, boundless, life-long, overwhelming, and as being something you do not have control over; you cannot choose who you fall in love with. This is consistent with the way in which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) described how love is seen in contemporary western society: that love has become a way of replacing religion.

Conversely, younger participants were more likely to talk about love in more nuanced ways. Some saw love as something that is temporary, momentary and varying in emotional investment, rather than something which is always life-long. As something that can change over time, once the relationship does not meet the needs of those

involved anymore. Some of these ideas of love are much more fitting with Giddens's (1992) idea of the 'pure relationship', relationships which only last as long as those in relationships want, which is as long as the relationship is providing for the needs of both partners; a 'pure relationship' is not necessarily forever and is based on the premise of equality.

However, other younger participants talked about there being different forms of love; forms of love that can be temporary and other forms of love that are life-long. This suggests that younger people are moving away from the idea that there is one true love that lasts forever, towards a more fluid construction of love that can take on different forms.

In terms of relationships, participants saw healthy relationships as those which are based on freedom; independence; respect; equality; reciprocity; trust; and fun and there were no age or gender differences. These reflect the words used by the females and males in Firmin's (2011) study to describe what they considered a good relationship to be. These were comparable to the elements that some participants explained as being markers for love, suggesting that for many participants, this is how love translated into good relationships for them. Again, these ideas about good/healthy relationships are akin to Giddens's (1992) 'pure relationship', suggesting that this is the ideal relationship type for participants in this study.

Jamieson (1999) argued that the 'pure relationship' is an improbable relationship type, as partners are tied together economically and domestically, and there are gendered inequalities in relationships. Most of these participants were not tied to partners economically or domestically. None of the participants in the 18-24-year-old age range had children and only a minority of participants in the 25-29 and 30-34-year-old age groups had children. However, a few participants aged 25 and over did state that they had caring responsibilities for their partners due to disability or poor mental health.

Younger adults are perhaps more able to pursue relationships that are based on the premises of equality and freedom when they do not have these economic or domestic ties. However, Giddens (1992: 5) argued that a key factor involved in the formation of

the 'pure relationships', is 'plastic sexuality', which is equality in sexuality between females and males and women being sexually free. As we have seen, women are not sexually free in the same ways that men are. This thesis has reinforced previous findings that female sexuality comes second to male sexuality; women are still expected to forsake their sexual wants in favour of male sexual wants and women can only take part in sexual activity so long as it fits with the rules of female sexuality (Mackinnon, 1989; Walker, 1997; Holland et al., 1998; Morgan et al., 2006; Burkett, 2010). Just because this is the type of relationship that young adults want and this is the way in which they construct love within their relationships, it does not necessarily mean that this is the most common form of relationship type amongst young adults. Thus, although this is the ideal type of relationship that young adults subscribe to and aim for, there is still a way to go before the 'pure relationship' becomes a reality.

Participants in both samples consistently talked about control or abuse as being markers of bad or unhealthy relationships, showing that participants were aware that abuse within relationships is always wrong, in contrast to participants in other studies (Wood, 2001; Kearney, 2001; Barter et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2011; Towns and Scott, 2013). Alongside abuse and control; unhappiness; imbalances; disrespect; lack of trust, especially as relating to infidelity and lying; lack of commitment; arguing; restrictions on freedom; pressure; and dependency were all talked about as being the basis of a bad or unhealthy relationship, which is compatible with participants' definitions of good relationships and their constructions of love. Again, there were no differences between age groups and these words were similar to those used by participants in Firmin's (2011) study to describe bad relationships.

Most participants did not mention love as being a component of a good relationship. However, as many of the terms used by many of the participants when describing what love meant to them overlapped with descriptions of healthy or good relationships given by the participants in this study, we can infer that this is how love translated into relationships for them. Participants may have felt that love within a good relationship goes without saying. It could also be that participants did not feel that being in love was a prerequisite for a good relationship. When love is looked at in the context of

abusive relationships, being in love does not always necessarily mean that a relationship is healthy.

The younger participants who had been in abusive relationships were more likely to talk about love as being about freedom. They used their own experiences of being in abusive relationships to construct their ideas of what love should be. On the contrary, younger participants who had no experience of abuse in their relationships were more likely to talk about love as devotion. This implies that this is because those younger participants who had experience of abuse recognise the dangers of situating love as being about devotion and forsaking their own needs as being precursors for abuse within a relationship. There did not seem to be any differences in the constructions of love of those aged 30-34 based on their abusive experiences.

Other studies have found that women consider having a boyfriend as more important than anything else (Wood, 2001; Chung, 2007). Some female and male participants in the original sample did suggest that they would prefer to be in a relationship for the sake of being in a relationship, but for the majority, this was not the case. Although not all the participants in this study were heterosexual, having a partner and being in a relationship above all else was not an idea that most of these participants subscribed to. Participants who had been in an abusive relationship were less likely to subscribe to this view. These participants now recognise that love does not mean being in a relationship that is unhappy at all costs.

Love within Abusive Relationships

Research Question 3: If young adults do not have the same responsibilities as older generations, does love help to tie them into abusive relationships?

Love in abusive relationships is complicated. Participants' constructions of love did help to tie the young adults into abusive relationships at the time of the relationship, but it was not just as simple as being in love with the abuser or feeling as though their

abuser loved them. Participants were doubtful of love between themselves and their abusers now. They recognised that the relationships could not have been loving relationships, as this was not how they now consider love to be. Although previous literature has argued that ideas surrounding romantic love keep women in abusive relationships (Towns and Adams, 2000), this study moves the debate on to show that other factors, such as fear, guilt, obsession and responsibility work alongside this love to help tie them into abusive relationships. This was despite the young age of some of these participants and the fact that most of the participants neither lived with their abusive partner nor had children.

Unlike in other studies looking at younger people's relationships, participants were also asked why their abusive relationships ended. This was done as a way of trying to understand what ties young adults into abusive relationships and what that breaks this tie. Some participants in this study talked about the end of the relationship coming after prolonged abuse that worsened or became physically abusive. Participants came to a realisation that their partners' abusive behaviour more than succeeded the good points of the relationship, which is consistent with Enander's (2011) finding that when a partner's abusive behaviour outweighs non-abusive behaviour within a relationship, victims seek to fall out of love to end the relationship. However, what is concerning about this finding is the sheer amount of abuse, particularly emotional abuse, that can be suffered before ending the relationship.

However, another key reason for ending the relationship, especially for the youngest participants was infidelity. Despite experiencing prolonged abuse, some participants only ended the relationship upon discovery of infidelity. Other authors have argued that westernised assumptions of love and relationships prioritise fidelity (Jackson, 1993). Previous research has also found that younger people are more likely see abuse as reasonable retaliation in the context of infidelity (Firmin, 2011; Bowen et al., 2013; Stonard, et al., 2015; McCarry and Lombard, 2016). That participants used infidelity as markers of unhealthy relationships or as proof that love did not exist within a relationship, as well as a reason to end relationships suggests that infidelity is positioned as more serious than abuse. This also shows that despite the participants in

this study subscribing to relationship type ideas that are more akin to Gidden's (1992) 'pure relationship', fidelity is still somewhat important to them.

The reasons given by participants for staying in abusive relationships are consistent with the findings of others. Feeling that a relationship should be worked on to keep it going (Fraser, 2005), putting up with behaviours that would not be seen as acceptable outside of a relationship (Fraser, 1999), fear of what would happen if the relationship ended (2007) and feeling as though love would help in the survival of abusive relationships (Wood, 2001; Kearney, 2001) are all reasons found in the literature. Donovan and Hester (2011; 2014) have also argued that it is those who give the most emotionally in relationships who are more susceptible to abuse. This shows for the first time, that even for this specific age group, young adults feel a responsibility to keep a relationship going, despite the abusive behaviours that they experience and there are inequalities in who does the emotion work in relationships.

Research Question 4: Is there a link between love and control in young adults' relationships?

Overall, most of the participants who reported experiencing abuse within their relationships thought that they were in love with their abusive partner at the time of the relationship. However, looking at the youngest age group alone, participants in this age group were just as likely to say they did not love their abusive partner as they were to say they did love them. Feeling dependent on the abuser, feeling sorry for the abuser, guilt, putting up with behaviour that they would not usually put up with, being together for a long time and being unhappy but staying in the relationship were all reasons given by participants for why they thought they must have been in love with their abusive partner at the time of the relationship. However, participants in all age groups said that they learned to loathe their partners at the end of the abusive relationships. This supports Enander's (2011) finding that victims of abuse used emotion work by only associating bad feelings with their abusive partners to prevent

themselves from falling in love again; these partners used emotion work to become capable of ending the abusive relationship.

Again, the older participants were more likely to believe that their abusive partners had loved them. Those in the younger age groups had mixed ideas on this. Despite there being confusion over whether their abusive partners loved them, participants who had been in coercive controlling relationships all said that their partners used to do things that at the time seemed to be ways of demonstrating love towards them. Love, or what individuals perceive as love, from abusive partners has been found to be a reason for why many victims of abuse within relationships have difficulty in ending these relationships (Towns and Adams, 2000; Wood, 2001; Borochowitz and Eisikovits, 2002; Fraser, 2005; Baley, 2010; Donovan and Hester, 2011; 2014; Toscano, 2014). Yet, at the time of the interview, nearly all the participants who experienced coercive control recognised that ways in which their abusers seemingly demonstrated love towards them were ways in which the abuser attempted to further coerce and control them. These participants no longer considered these behaviours to be illustrative of love, in their own terms, now.

Despite the worrying behaviours experienced by participants in this study, those younger participants who had been victimised seemingly used their experiences to inform their relationships now and in the future.

Love and Coercive control Intertwining in the Relationships of Young Adults

In summary, coercive control is apparent in the relationships of some young adults to the same extent that it is in older age groups. This coercive control is individualised to younger people group using technology, which makes it easier for abusers to coerce and control without physically living with a partner. Females and males were victimised in their relationships, but coercive control is gendered as females are more likely to experience the pattern of ongoing abuse that is specific to coercive control, that Stark (2007) labels as a liberty crime. Males are also more likely to be the perpetrators of this form of abuse.

In this study, constructions of love differed by age group but not by gender or sexuality. Older participants constructed love as being about putting other's needs before their own, being forgiving, all-consuming, boundless, life-long, overwhelming, and as being something you do not have control over. While younger adults were more likely to see love as being temporary, momentary, varying and emotional investment. They were also more likely to describe different forms of love. This suggests that younger people are moving towards constructions of love that are much more fluid. This was reflected in participants' ideas of good relationships, which they saw as being based on freedom, independence, respect, equality, reciprocity, trust and fun, with the absence of abuse and control, unhappiness, imbalances, disrespect, lack of trust, lack of commitment, restrictions on freedom and dependency.

These differences in constructions of love need to be looked at in context. Although the younger participants seemingly subscribe to more fluid ideas about love, most of these participants had been in abusive relationships, and the majority described love between themselves and their ex-partners at the time of the abusive relationship. It could be that these constructions of love have been formed because of these abusive experiences.

Nonetheless, constructions of love still helped to tie young adults into their abusive relationships. Participants described their abusive partners as acting in ways that they believed demonstrated their partners' love towards them at the time of the relationship, but they now consider these demonstrations to be attempts to further coerce and control. Therefore, love and coercive control do intertwine within the relationships of young adults, but this idea of love between themselves and their abusive partner went alongside fear, guilt and responsibility, preventing them from ending their abusive relationships.

Original Contribution

This project was the first qualitative study in the United Kingdom to look specifically at coercive control and love within the relationships of young adults. It was also the first

study to look explicitly at the reasons why young adults end abusive relationships and how constructions of love differ between age groups. The results of this study are unique in that although love was found to be a factor which helped tie young adults into coercive controlling relationships, these ideas surrounding love did not exist in isolation. Rather, these feelings of love were matched by feelings of fear, guilt and responsibility, which served to sustain abusive relationships in the same ways as older adult relationships.

Recommendations

The findings from this study add credence to the need for sex and relationships education to be broad and inclusive in all schools in England. This education needs to look specifically at abuse, including coercive control and technological forms of abuse. As mentioned in the introduction, The Children and Social Work Act 2017 was changed to include compulsory Relationship Education for primary-age children and compulsory Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in ALL Secondary Schools (HM Government, 2017). However, the draft of the *Statutory Guidance of RSE and Health Education* (HM Government, 2018) is not as inclusive as hoped. The draft states that although the government encourages schools to include non-heterosexual relationships in their RSE, it is not compulsory (HM Government, 2018). This should be compulsory; relationships are diverse and the RSE should reflect that. Gender is also missing from this draft; this is nonsensical considering the breadth of research showing that gendered attitudes are at least in part responsible for unequal and abusive relationships. These gendered attitudes need to be challenged through Relationship Education and RSE.

The draft also states that parents should be given the right to withdraw their children (HM Government, 2018). If a parent can withdraw their child, then how can RSE be considered compulsory? RSE should be considered the same as any National

Curriculum subject and the programme for teaching should be devised centrally, rather than by individual schools. This would ensure that all schools are receiving the same quality education.

Most participants in this study seemed to have healthy relationship ideals, but some still ended up in abusive relationships. It does seem that although young adults know how relationships *should* be, this does not necessarily translate into their own relationships. Relationships Education should look more at how behaviours manifest in the lived relationships of young adults and should look at how perpetrators of abuse use practices of love to manipulate emotions and sustain abusive relationships. This idea of responsibility that young adults have towards partners when in relationships should also be considered and teach strategies for ending relationships. Like Papp et al. (2016), I believe that ideas surrounding the acceptability of jealous behaviour being a sign of love should be challenged within Relationships Education.

The findings of this current study will be used to create a leaflet highlighting the warning signs of abusive relationships. Hopefully this could be used within SRE lessons. This, alongside a report summarising the findings of this study, will be sent to all original sample participants.

Consent needs to be considered in SRE, but alongside unwanted sex. This should challenge gendered norms that female sexuality should come second to male sexuality and make clear that women should not be taking part in unwanted sexual activity. This education should be aimed at males as well as females. As Beres (2007; 2014) has argued, the meaning of consent should be clearly defined in programmes and programmes should look at how consent is conveyed in relationships.

A consultation on this draft *Guidance* is currently underway until November 2018 (HM Government, 2018); hopefully considerable changes are made to this draft before the Policy is implemented in 2019.

Healthy relationship education should also be made available at all universities, alongside bystander programmes, such as 'The Intervention Initiative' (Fenton, Mott,

McCartan and Rumney, 2014) as it is clear young adults could benefit from this education.

This study sample was homogenous in terms of ethnicity and gender. For future research, efforts should be concentrated into obtaining a more diverse and representative sample of young adults, so that possible generalisations can be made.

Future research could seek to recruit participants based on their experiences of abuse within their relationships, which would hopefully lead to more knowledge on how coercive control works in the relationships of young adults and its co-occurrence with other forms of relationship abuse.

Recruitment for the original sample was most successful using the Facebook accounts of student societies at universities. As young adults are attune to using social media to communicate, this could be utilised during recruitment for future studies with younger people

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Demographics

The purpose of these questions is to find out a bit more about you and your background in order to better understand young adults' relationships. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to and any answers given will be kept confidential. Please ask if there is anything you are unsure of.

How old are you?

What is your gender?

Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender Male ☐ Transgender Female ☐ Other ☐ *Please specify.....*

Are you currently in a relationship? Please tick

Yes ☐

No ☐

How many relationships have you been in?

Do you consider yourself to be disabled? Please tick

Yes ☐

No ☐

What is your ethnic origin? Please tick

White:

British ☐ Irish ☐ Any other White
background ☐

Black or Black British:

Caribbean ☐ African ☐ Any other Black
background ☐

Asian or Asian British:

Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Chinese ☐ Other Asian
background ☐

Mixed background:

White and Asian ☐ White and Black
Caribbean ☐
White and Black African ☐ Any other mixed
background ☐

Other ethnic background: ☐ *please specify.....*

How would you describe your sexual orientation? Please tick

Heterosexual ☐ Gay ☐ Lesbian ☐ Bisexual ☐ Other ☐ *Please
specify.....*

What is your religion? Please tick

Christianity ☐ Buddhism ☐ Islam ☐
Sikhism ☐
Judaism ☐ Atheism ☐ Other ☐ *Please
specify.....*

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

This interview is taking place in order to find out about young adults' relationships and love, and the positive and negative aspects, and so I will be asking you your views and experiences of love and relationships. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. All answers will be kept confidential and real names and personal details will not be used when reporting any data. Before starting, can I ask that you read the information sheet and ask me if there is anything that you do not understand? If you are willing to take part, then please sign the consent form.

Good/Best Relationships

I would like to begin by asking some questions about your best relationship.

(The exact questions asked will depend on the answers given by participants)

What do you consider to be a good or healthy relationship?

Can you tell me about your best relationship?

Probing questions:

Why do you consider this to be your best relationship?

Do you think you were in love? Why/why not?

Do you think your partner was in love? Why/why not?

Can you tell me about a time you felt most in love in that relationship?

(What did you do to demonstrate/show love?

Why?

What did your partner do to demonstrate/show love?

Why?

How did this make you feel/affect you?)

Can you tell me about a time when you felt least in love in that relationship?

Can you think of a time that made you doubt whether you loved your partner?

Was your partner the same age as you?

Did you live with your partner?

Overall, would you say this was a positive or negative/ good or bad relationship?

Why do you say this?

How long were you with that partner?

Why did this relationship end?

Bad/Worst Relationship

I would like to ask some questions about your worst relationship.

(The exact questions asked will depend on the answers given by participants)

What do you consider a bad or unhealthy relationship to be?

Can you tell me about your worst relationship?

Probing questions:

Why do you consider this to be your worst relationship?

Do you think you were in love in this relationship? Why/why not?

Do you think your partner was in love? Why/why not?

Can you tell me about a time when you felt most in love in that relationship?

(What did you do to demonstrate/show love?

Why?

What behaviours did your partner do to demonstrate/show love?

Why?

How did this make you feel/affect you?)

Can you tell me about a time when you felt least in love in that relationship?

Was your partner the same age as you?

Did you live with your partner?

Overall, would you say this was a positive or negative/ good or bad relationship?

Why do you say this?

Negative Behaviours in Relationships

I am going to ask about some negative behaviours that can occur in relationships and whether you have experienced and/or perpetrated these behaviours. I will begin by asking about your experiences

Have you ever...?/Did you ever experience...?

- Controlling behaviours:

(Felt you had to tell your partner where you were going/what you were doing/who you were seeing?

Received insults from your partner?

Received pestering calls/text messages/emails/social media messages?

Felt afraid of your partner?)

- Physical violence:

(Has a partner ever used physical force against you? For example, have you been hit/pushed/kicked/restrained by a partner?)

- Sexual violence:

(Received unwanted sexual touching from a partner?

Felt pressured into doing something sexual when you didn't want to?

Had a partner refuse to use protection during sex?

Had sex even though you didn't want to?)

Why do you think this happened?

How did this make you feel?

Was this the first time you experienced this?

Did you experience this again?

Have you ever carried out...?/Did you ever...?

- Controlling violence:
(Made your partner tell you where they were going/what they were doing/who they were seeing?
Insulted your partner?
Made your partner feel afraid?
Made pestering calls/text messages/emails/social media messages?)
- Physical violence:
(Have you ever used physical force against a partner? For example, hit/kicked/restrained/pushed your partner?)
- Sexual violence:
(Sexually touched a partner even though they didn't want you to?
Had sex with your partner even though they didn't want to?
Pressured a partner into doing something sexual when they didn't want to?
Refused to wear protection when having sex with a partner?)

Why did you do this?

Had you done this before?

Did you do this again?

Questions to ask if abusive experiences apply to different partner not mentioned in best/worst relationship:

Was your partner the same age as you?

Did you live with your partner?

Overall, would you say this was a positive or negative/ good or bad relationship?

Why do you say this?

How long were you with your partner?

Why did this relationship end?

Abuse

I am now going to ask some questions about abuse within relationships.

What do you consider an abusive relationship to be?

Do you think abuse is common in the relationships of people around the same age as you?

Do you think you have ever been in an abusive relationship?

General Questions about love.

The interview will finish by with some questions about your thoughts on 'love'..

How would you describe love?

What do you think love is?

What do you think being in love means?

How do you believe people show that they are in love?

If participants did not mention that they were in love in the best or worst relationship:

Do you think you have been in love?

Why do you think this is?

How do you know that you were in love?

All interviews to finish with:

Do you prefer being in a relationship or not being in a relationship?

Why?

End – Thank participant for their time. Give support information.

Appendix 3: Recruitment Poster



Your views are needed...

in order to better understand young people's concerns about their relationships.

My name is Donna Clutterbuck and I am a PhD student at the University of Bristol. I am interested in exploring what young people like and dislike about being in a relationship and any concerns they may have. My research involves interviews with young people aged between 18-25.

I would be extremely grateful if you would take part, as any answers that you give will be important for gaining an insight into young people's ideas and experiences. I hope that the findings will help to better understand young people's concerns and how these can be best addressed.

If you are aged **18-25, male or female**, and want more information about this study, please contact Donna Clutterbuck by emailing donna.clutterbuck@bristol.ac.uk

YOUR views are extremely important!



Appendix 4: Information Sheet

Donna Clutterbuck
University of Bristol
8 Priory Road
Bristol
BS8 1TZ



donna.clutterbuck@bristol.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet for 'Young People's Relationships' Study Interview

Thank you for your interest in this study looking at young people's likes, dislikes and concerns within relationships. My name is Donna Clutterbuck and I am a PhD student at the University of Bristol. My research involves interviews with young people aged 18-25. I am interested in exploring what you like and dislike about being in a relationship and any concerns that you may have. I would be extremely grateful if you would take part in an interview, as any answers that you give will be important for gaining an insight into young people's ideas and experiences. I hope that the findings will help to aid the understanding of young people's concerns and how these can be best addressed. The interview itself will last approximately one hour.

Interview participants will be given a £5 Love2Shop voucher in order to reimburse you for your time. However, taking part in this study is entirely voluntary; you can choose to leave the study at any time up until one month from the interview date and you can choose to not answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering. You would still retain the voucher if you choose to withdraw. If you do choose to take part, all of your personal information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone besides my research supervisors. All data will be stored securely and kept for up to ten years in a secure storage facility. Information will only be shared with anyone outside of this research project if it is believed that there is a **risk of significant harm** to a child or young person. The answers that you give will be used to form the basis for the findings in my PhD thesis, academic conference papers and academic articles. However, you will not be identifiable in any published material or reports of findings

and your personal details will not be shared with anyone. Real names will not be used at any point.

It is intended that the interview will be digitally recorded and notes will be made throughout. However, if you are not comfortable with being recorded, detailed notes can be taken instead.

You are free to ask questions throughout the research process, particularly if there is anything you are not sure about.

If you would like to take part in an interview, you will need to read and sign the consent form that accompanies this participant information sheet. Please feel free to ask me questions if there is anything on this form that is not clear.

Thank you again for your interest in your study. If you would like further information, please contact me on the email address above.

If you have any concerns about this research project, you can contact my supervisor, Professor Marianne Hester (marianne.hester@bristol.ac.uk).

Appendix 5: Consent Form

Donna Clutterbuck
University of Bristol
8 Priory Road
Bristol
BS8 1TZ



donna.clutterbuck@bristol.ac.uk

Consent Form for 'Young People's Relationships' Study Interview

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study, your answers are extremely important for this research project. By signing this consent form, you are agreeing to take part in an interview for this study researching the negative and positive aspects of love and young adults' relationships. Please initial each box below to show that you understand and agree to the following:

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for this project and I am happy to take part in this study. ☐

I confirm that I am aged 18-25. ☐

I confirm that I understand that I will be taking part in an interview. ☐

I understand that I am free to ask questions throughout the research process. ☐

I understand that my answers will be kept confidential and will not be shared unless it is believed that there is a risk of significant harm to a child or young person. ☐

I understand that all my identifiable details, including names will be removed and not included in the reporting of findings. ☐

I understand that I do not have to answer any questions I do not feel comfortable answering. ☐

I understand that I can withdraw from the research process at any time up until [one month from interview date]. ☐

I understand that I will be reimbursed for my time with a £5 Love2Shop voucher And that this will be retained by myself even if I should choose to withdraw. ☐

I am happy for the interview to be digitally recorded and for notes to be taken. ☐

I understand that my data will be kept securely and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research project. ☐

I understand that, after the research project, my data will be kept securely for ten years in a secure storage facility. ☐

I understand that my answers will be used to form the basis of the findings of a PhD thesis, conference papers and academic articles. ☐

If you agree to take part in an interview for this study, please print your name and sign and date the form below. Thank you again for taking part.

Name:.....

Signature:..... Date:.....